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BELGIUM, HER KINGS, KINGDOM AND PEOPLE

His Majesty, Albert, King of the Belgians.

Belgium, Her Kings Kingdom & People

By

John de Courcy Mac Donnell

With Photogravure Portrait and Fifty other Portraits and Illustrations

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PREFACE

DURING the twelve years' continuous residence in Brussels in which I have made researches and collected materials for this work it has been my good fortune to have met and discussed Belgian questions with men of every rank, of every party, and of every calling. All have spoken to me freely: to all I owe gratitude.

August personages, inspired with hereditary affection for England, whence Belgium's first King came, have shown me what are the feelings and aspirations of this country, which must no longer be called a little state. Archives have been opened for me, and the Ministers for Foreign and Home Affairs, of Justice, of Industry and Labour, and the Permanent Under-Secretaries of the various departments have shown me a courtesy so great and borne so well with my incessant demands for information, that I can find no words sufficient in which to express my thanks to them.

Chevalier Edmond Carton de Wiart, Honorary Secretary to His Majesty the King of the Belgians, procured many facilities for me, as did Comte Fritz van den Steen de Jehay, Belgian Minister to Luxembourg, lately Under-Secretary at the Belgian Foreign Office.

Dom Ursmer Berlière, Conservateur en chef of the Bibliotheque Royale, M. Stainier, Administrateur-Délégué, and his colleague M. Paris,

Honorary Librarian to King Albert, gave me facilities which made my labour much more pleasant than it could have been otherwise.

For the correction of my manuscript, and many useful counsels, I am indebted to Colonel Moore, C.B., of Moore Hall. I am also indebted to Mr. P. J. Walsh for his painstaking revision of my work.

While I was completing this work storm clouds swept over Belgium. They have been dissipated: Belgium's wisdom has proved itself superior to Belgians' folly. The country, rich in sense and rich in money, is arming herself for peace, and binding herself to make obligatory on all her citizens the education which the majority of them already possess in a high degree.

Belgium contains races which speak different languages, and differ on religious questions. These races united to free themselves from an alien yoke. Doing so they laid the foundation of their country's prosperity to-day. The secret of Belgium's greatness lies in the motto the Belgian Revolutionists adopted when, cutting themselves off from outside, they clasped hands and cried "L'UNION FAIT LA FORCE!"

JOHN DE COURCY MAC DONNELL

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BELGIUM, HER KINGS, KINGDOM, AND PEOPLE

CHAPTER I

THE GROWTH OF THE NATION

To ceaseless industry the Belgian people owe their national existence. That industry has placed Belgium, which counts at the present hour seven and a half million inhabitants, relatively to its population, at the head of the two worlds, in economic competition.[1]

"Belgium, chosen land, is créatrice of industries and aptitudes," says Charles Morrisseaux, Director-General of the Belgian Ministry of Industry and Labour. "These acquired aptitudes, fortified from generation to generation, form the solid foundations of our prosperity. For to-day we have exhausted a great part of our natural riches; enormous superficies of our antique forests have disappeared, our old coal bed is impoverished, and it is necessary to descend to greater and greater depths to make extracts from it, at an ever-increasing cost of

[1] So Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of Malines, asserted at the celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the University of Louvain, on the 10th of May, 1909, referring to the population as seven million: "Notre indépendance nationale n'était que le résultat de notre culture nationale," says H. Pirenne, *La Nation Belge*, p. 9.

production, of the combustible needed by our workshops and manufactories. It is outside, across the ocean that we go to search our raw material. . . . But industry remains, because professional aptitude has fixed it, and because with marvellous suppleness it has adapted itself to new economic conditions."

The Belgians are descended from Celtic and Germanic tribes. The Celts invaded Belgium and conquered the Ligurian inhabitants of the country about 530 years before Christ; the Germanic infiltration was centuries later.[1] The beginning of Belgian industry can be traced to Celtic sources: the Celts were the first tillers of the rich Belgian soil. The Celts and Germans descended from the same great Aryan stock. They were alike in gigantic stature. The Celts had yellow hair floating over their shoulders; they wore garments of brilliant hue, like the modern Gaels, their scions, covering neck and arms with chains of gold. The Germans, blue-eyed like the Celts, had ruddier hair twisted into knots on their heads; they wore no ornaments. The Celts were quick-tempered, terrible in wrath, but normally good-humoured. Their tribes were aristocratic clanships. Their nobles went forth to war surrounded by dependents, under a chief of all the clans, elected annually. The German government was republican. The Celt was agricultural and pastoral, the ferocious German hated a shepherd,

[1] The *Germani* of Cæsar were a Celtic people, *cf.* Tourneur, "Germani-Gaesti," Le Musée Belge; 1902, Vol. VI, p. 188. Jullien contends that the Celts passed on from Belgium towards the interior about the year 500 B.C.; and assigns the crossing of the Rhine by the Belgians "Jadis, freres de sang el de langue de la féderation celique," to 800 B.C. *Histoire de la Gaule*, Vol. I, pp. 244, 245, 313–315.

and considered farming a disgrace to manhood. Blood, not sweat, was to him the means of acquisition. He was a warlike nomad, a temporary, lonely hut was enough for him. But the Celt built towns and villages, and was gregarious. The brave aboriginal Celts of Gallia Belgica were, according to Cæsar, supreme amongst the Gauls for prowess. The two races were just similar enough to blend, and unlike enough to supplement one another's extremes. The immense territory called Belgica comprised some two dozen peoples, a vast military federation, bound together only by an unwritten law of common interest.[1]

The federation of the Belgic peoples continued under Roman dominion, and was strengthened when Roman gave way to Frank. Industry throve in Belgium under the Romans. Thanks to Roman peace, the inhabitants were able to cultivate their fields, clear their forests, and attain to a considerable degree of comfort, while preserving their idioms and their national cults. The great towns which, far off on the east and south, surrounded this extreme frontier of the civilized world, exercised a very slow action on them. Treves, city of the Treveri, the most powerful of the tribes that with-

[1] Passmore, *In Further Ardenne*, p. 5.

Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique*, says: "Les plus orientaux des Belges du Nord, les Eburons (Limbourg et Liége), les *Condrusi* (Condroz), les *Caeroesi* (pays de Prüm ?), les *Poemani* (Famenne), les Segni (haute vallée de l'Ourthe ?), et les Aduatiques (Namur) paraissent bien avoir été fortement mélangés d'éléments teutoniques. . . . En revanche, à l'ouest et au sud de ceux-ci, les bassins de l'Escaut et de la Meuse n'étaient occupés que par des hommes de race celtique: Nerviens (sud de Brabant et Hainaut), Ménapiens (Flandre et Brabant du Nord), Morins (pays de Térouanne), Atrébates (Artois), et Trévires (Ardenne et Moselle)."

stood Cæsar, claims antiquity greater than that of Rome.

ANTE ROMAN TREVERIS STETIT ANNOS MILLE
TRECENTIS PERSTET ET AETERNA PACE
FRUATUR AMEN

is inscribed on an old house standing in that city. Nearly five hundred years after the Roman invasion Saint Jerome found the Celtic idiom surviving there.

Before the third century great numbers of Germans crossed the Rhine to take service in the frontier legions, or to establish themselves as colonists in the provinces. Scattered amongst the Celtic populations, these Germans speedily merged into them. The Germanic tribes conquered by Julien in 358 were permitted to establish themselves as Roman subjects in the solitudes of the Campine, Taxandria. In the commencement of the fifth century, when the legions were withdrawn to defend Italy against the Goths, the Franks spread over Belgium and commenced to colonize the valleys of the Scheldt and the Lys. In 431 the Saliens took possession of Tournay, while the Ripuarians, marching from the east to the west, descended on the left bank of the Meuse. Thus, in the northern provinces of Belgium and Germany, abandoned by Rome, two peoples found themselves face to face, as in the time when Cæsar arrived in these countries. These people remain face to face to-day. Neither political nor geographical barrier separates them. Their linguistic frontiers touch as closely, and are as distinct as frontiers of land and sea. Evenly, like an advancing ocean, the Germanic

tribes spread over the desert plain of Taxandria, in the fifth century; evenly, as the Roman soldiers withdrew, they advanced on the valleys of the Meuse and Lys and crossed the solitary pastures of the Menapiens. Their advance was checked between Antwerp and Mons by a rampart of woods. They made no effort to penetrate the forest, la Charbonnière, named by the Salic law as the frontier of the Franks.

On the other side of the rampart, in the clearings and valleys of the forest, the Celts maintained themselves, designated Walas by the Germans, direct ancestors of the Walloons of to-day. The Charbonnière has almost completely disappeared; there rests but debris of the dense Ardennes which protected the Walloons on the east, but, though the natural barriers which separated the two races on Belgian soil are gone, these races remain ethnographically and philologically distinct on the lands planted by their forefathers fourteen hundred years ago.[1]

The mass of the people established below the forest did not become Christians with Clovis, as did the warriors who followed the king into Gaul. Their conversion was the work of missionaries from Celtic Ireland and other distant lands. It was not until the commencement of the eighth century that the last pagans of Taxandria, of Brabant, and of the Ardennes were converted.[2]

The Church retained, or revived, the original

[1] Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique*, Vol. I. p. 15; Kurth, *Frontière linguistique.*

[2] Christianity, introduced by the Romans, disappeared, for a moment, almost entirely, on their withdrawal.—Pirenne, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

diocesan boundaries of the Belgian Celts, without taking into account the racial or linguistic frontier, placing Franks and Celts in the same dioceses. By the union, thus created, of the two peoples the inhabitants of the Low Countries were prepared for the rôle of intermediaries between Roman and Germanic civilizations which they filled in succeeding centuries. It is this which made the history of the southern Low Countries different from that of the Low Countries of the north. According as the new faith took more complete possession of their souls, the Franks came more fully under the influence of these Romanized regions where their bishops lived, where their cathedrals were elevated, where the relics of the martyrs they venerated were preserved, where their clergy was formed. "In common with the Walloons they had the same religious centres. . . . Under the action of the Church the national antipathies were attenuated and the linguistic frontier ceased to be a barrier between the men it separated." [1] The politics of the Merovingians unconsciously continued the work commenced by the Church in detaching the Franks of the lowlands of Belgium from the Germanic world. The political frontiers were determined by the ancient ecclesiastical circumscriptions, and racial differences were ignored. Franks or Walloons, all those who lived in the bishoprics of Cambrai, Noyon, and Térouanne were considered Neustrians, and all who lived in the bishopric of Liége, Austrasians. The first civic delimitation of frontiers on Belgian soil resulted in separating the Salians of Flanders from

[1] Pirenne, *op. cit.*, Vol. I. p. 22.

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BRUSSELS ; COLUMN COMMEMORATIVE OF THE NATIONAL CONGRESS

Germania, and of placing under Germanic rule the Walloons of the Ardennes, Namur, and Hainaut.

In the end of the eighth century, when Austrasia and Neustria ceased to exist, the frontier was effaced, but it was retraced later, under similar conditions, and the fact is notable that from the earliest period the linguistic frontier did not mark a political frontier in Belgium. Elsewhere the German tribes formed national duchies and grouped themselves according to the affinities of blood and tongue around a hereditary chief: it was not so in the basin of the Scheldt. Still more strange, the name of Francia was never given to the territories of the north of the Charbonniére from which the Frankish warriors set out, under Clovis, for the conquest of Gaul. The names given to these territories, Flanders, Brabant, had no ethnographical significance.

The Celtic tribes of Wallonia retained their latinized tongue, and transmitted it, with their customs, to the Franks settled amongst them, whom they gradually absorbed. During the sixth and seventh centuries the events that happened on Gallic soil little affected the inhabitants of the Salic lands. It was when the frontiers of Christian Europe were extended by Charlemagne to the Elbe the Low Countries became the centre of mediæval civilization. Thenceforward, across these plains, from east to west, the exchange of manners and ideas took place. As often as they were the battle-fields of Europe, so often were they the nurseries of social experiment. The greater part of the demesnes, and the favourite residences of the Carlovingian monarchs were situated in these

districts, between the Rhine and the sea. All who betook themselves to the court at Aix-la-Chapelle crossed them; ambassadors, missi dominichi, bishops, courtiers, monks from England and Ireland, grammarians from Italy, sages and charlatans, knights and ladies. The institutions of Belgium were shaped by Charlemagne's own hands. The great domains constituted throughout the country retained for centuries the organization edicted in his Capitulare de Villis. The echevenate established by him remained until the end of the eighteenth century the most national and characteristic magistrature of Belgium.

In the Carlovingian period Belgium was a centre of religion and learning. To Belgium from the great schools of Ireland came the men who were destined through the next two centuries not merely to leave their mark on the Church as theologians and founders of monasteries, but, further, to play an important part in moulding the new civilization of the Frankish empire, to lay the foundations of modern philosophy, and to promote the study of natural science and literature by lucubrations, crude, indeed, as compared with the productions of more favoured ages, but standing out conspicuous above the level of their own time.[1] These

[1] Boswell, *An Irish Precursor of Dante*, p. 5. The influence of the Irish missionaries is traceable on all sides in Belgium. Dr. Grattan-Flood states the establishment of the Irish monks was the beginning of the cult of music in Belgium ("Celtic Irish Influence on Music in the Middle Ages," *The Pan-Celtic Quarterly for* 1911, p. 42). According to a communication made by M. Boeymaens-Pontus to the Archæological Congress held at Malines in 1911, the carillons of Flanders ring out in Celtic, their notes, "bim-bam-bom," repeating the Celtic word for sound.

missionaries taught the religion of Rome, and praised God in the Latin tongue, but the spirit that animated them, the imagery they used, was Celtic, and gave to the peoples of Belgium, already wholly or in great part Celtic, the impress which writers who recognize that Belgian civilization is not Germanic, or Gallo-Roman, or a mixture of the two, call European, but which was, and is, in fact, Celtic.

The privileged situation of the Low Countries in the Carlovingian period was as manifest in economic activity as it was in the intensity of religious life and learning. The commerce of these countries was developed in contrast with the rest of Europe, given up entirely to agriculture, where the production of each demesne was limited to its particular needs. The supplies for the court at Aix-la-Chapelle were carried on the Belgian rivers. Along them, to the north, were borne the wines of the Moselle. Already in the Carlovingian period the cloths of Flanders had a world-wide reputation as luxurious stuffs destined for the use of great people. The products of the Flemish and Frisian looms were brought to the markets of central Europe along the Rhine, the Scheldt, and the Meuse; they were borne by sea to Scandinavia and the British Isles from the ports of l'Ecluse, Quentivic, and Durstede. The maritime commerce of these ports led to the development of river traffic. Warehouses and quays were built on the banks of the great rivers. Valenciennes, on the Scheldt, and Maestrict, situated at the point where the Roman road cuts the course of the Meuse, were important agglomerations of merchants and carriers in the time of Charlemagne.

New political unions of the Flemish and Walloon races were consequent on the treaty of Verdun, made in 843 between the sons of the Emperor Louis the Pious, partitioning their heritage. By that treaty, Charles the Bald received the territories which, later, formed France; Louis the Germanic those known in after ages as Germany; while Lothaire obtained an immense band of territories between the compact kingdoms of his brothers. These territories, without racial or geographical unity, cut across mountain ranges and watersheds, englobing men of every language and race from the North Sea to the centre of Italy. Belgium is a fragment of the empire of Lotharingia. If it is desired to make the country's history commence by a treaty, says Pirenne, it is not the Conference of London which must be taken as a starting-point, but the partition of Verdun.[1]

The line of separation drawn by the treaty of Verdun subsisted for centuries. Throughout the Middle Ages it marked the frontiers, in the north, of France and Germany. Flanders belonged to France; Brabant, Hainaut, and Liége to Germany. From the first the relations between these divisions of great states were close and numerous. In the bilingual principalities Flemings and Walloons lived side by side in good accord. Neither sought to subjugate the other. In spite of differences of idiom and manners, each little feudal state united its inhabitants under the same laws. The Liége law extended over the Thiosian Hesbaye; Lille and Douay had the same municipal organization as Ghent, Bruges, and Ypres.

[1] *La Nation Belge*, p. 2.

Above all, industry and commerce shaped the diverse territories of Belgium into a single mass. From the thirteenth century the economic activity of all the Belgian states was directed towards the ports of Flanders. Community of interest led the provinces to conclude treaties of intercourse, alliances, and monetary conventions. The busy towns, richer, larger, and more numerous in Belgium than elsewhere, extended their influence over the country on each side of the linguistic frontier. Belgium was never a land in which men lived without differing, but the intestine struggles which mark its history were between patricians and plebeians, not between Walloons and Flemings.

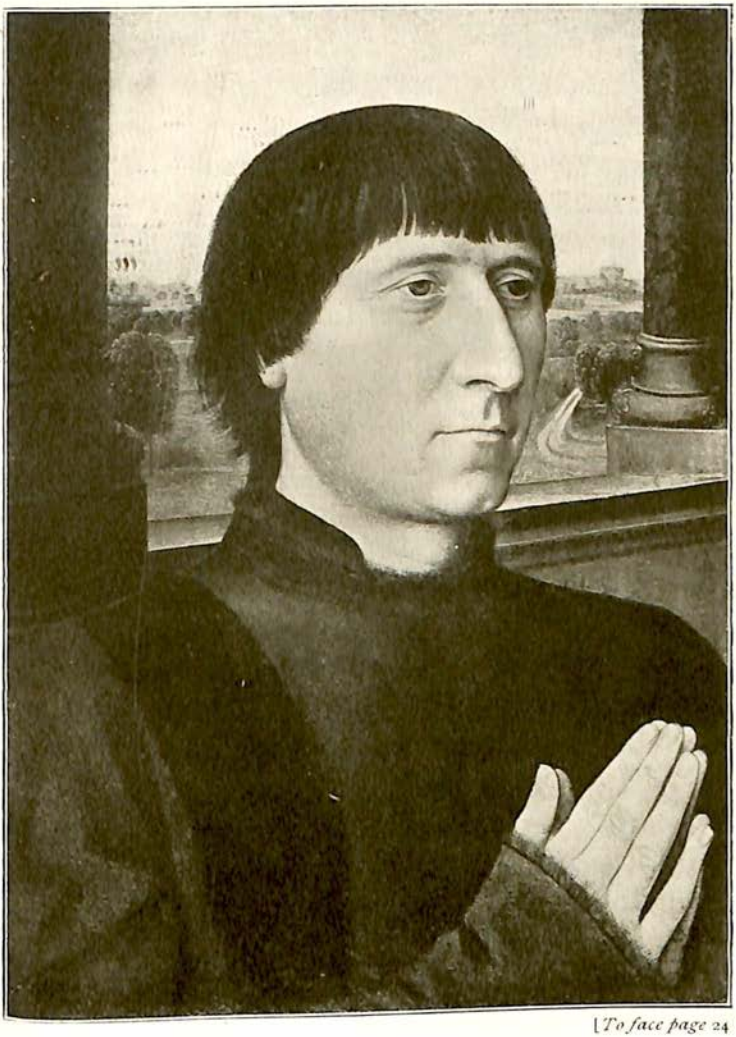
As the relations of the Belgian provinces with each other became more close the ties which bound them to France and Germany loosened. The power of Germany grew weak rapidly in the regions between the Scheldt and the Meuse. "The support of the French kings contributed largely to the separation of the Lotharingian provinces from the Empire. That of the English enabled the Flemish to defy their French suzerain. From the time of Louis VI to the end of the fourteenth century a continuous struggle took place between the Flemings and the Capetian kings of France, in which the Flemings would have succumbed but for the aid of England. In that struggle France triumphed for a time. Under Philippe Augustus she dominated Flanders and the imperial fiefs of the Low Countries. Under Philippe le Bel she reduced Flanders to the condition of a French province, and imposed a French Lieutenant on the country, as Governor; but the bourgeois plutocrats, on whose support

France relied, exasperated the artisans, who rose, and, beneath the walls of Courtrai, overthrew the patricians and the power that supported them.

Flanders lost territory in the long war that followed that astounding victory; but she regained her dynasty and her independence. The support of England protected her against fresh aggression on the part of France. At this period, ties, already ancient, of friendship and commerce, bound Flanders to England. Great numbers of Flemings had enrolled themselves in the army of William the Conqueror. These, the conquest achieved, remained in England. The military invasion of England prepared the way for a peaceful invasion of peasants, artisans, and traders. Flanders no less than Normandy benefited by the conquest. Amongst the crowds of French-speaking men, the Francigenae of the chronicles, who followed the nobles and clergy across the North Sea, the Flemings were numerous.[1]

The growing importance of London enhanced the prosperity of Bruges. Greatest of the Flemish cities created to supply the ceaselessly increasing needs of Belgian industry and commerce which had survived the shocks that marked the commencement of the feudal epoch and levelled the old Roman foundations, Bruges was the centre of the English shipping trade. From thence were ex-

[1] It must be remembered that up to the fourteenth century Flanders was a bilingual country. Until then the word "Flemish" had not an ethnographical significance, it applied, without distinction, to all the subjects, Walloon and Thiois, of the Counts of Flanders. In the ninth century the Bishops of Térouanne were obliged to speak the idioms of both people in their dioceses.



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WILLIAM MOREEL, BOURGMESTRE OF BRUGES

(From the painting by Memling

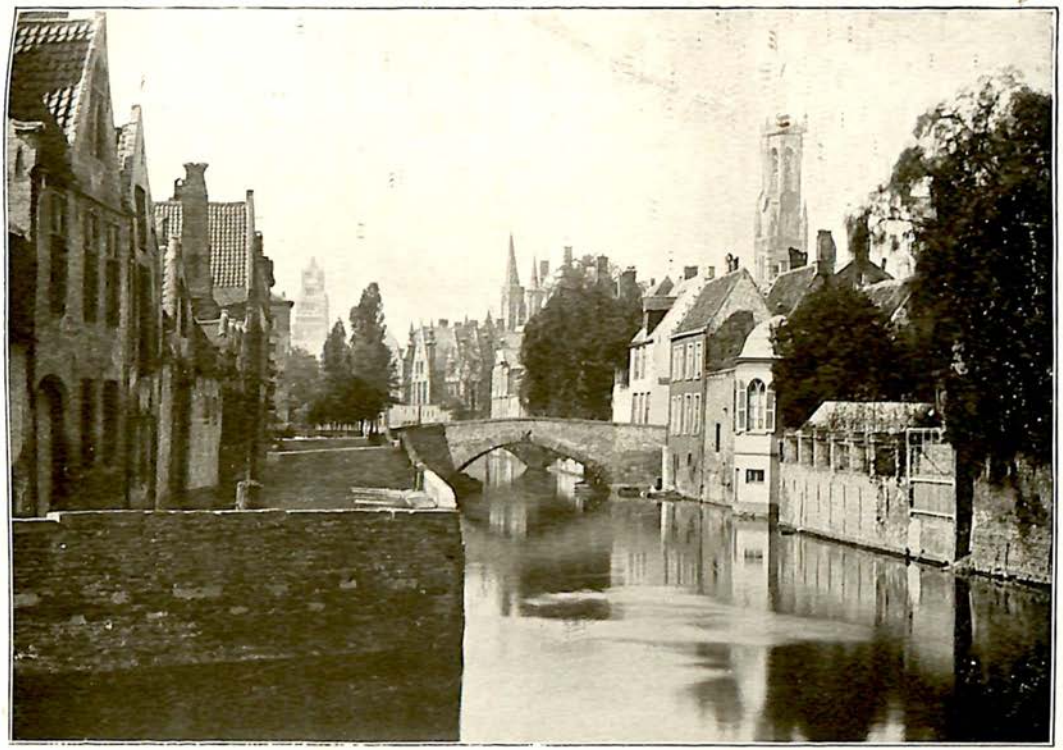
ported the wines of France and Germany, the carved stones of Tournay, and the cloths of gold and spices of the merchants of Lombardy, as well as the linen and woollens of Flanders. To the chant of Kyrie Eleison the Flemish sailors mounted the Thames; their cargoes were discharged at warehouses they possessed on the banks of that river, whence they were dispatched to the great fairs of England.[1] Whilst English merchants frequented the Belgian ports and fairs, and bought largely of the products of the Flemish looms, Flanders looked to England for her raw material. The rich lands of Flanders, added to by the embankment of the polder regions, were grazed by great herds of sheep, but as early as the eleventh century the native supplies of wool proved insufficient for the Flemish weavers and the importation of English wool commenced.

The sheep raised on English pastures were renowned for the fineness and length of their fleeces. Sure of finding good markets in Flanders, English landowners continually developed their sheep-farms. The Cistercian abbots were foremost amongst those who sheared great herds; the wool of each English abbey was known and specially quoted on the exchange of Bruges. The Crown profited as well as the nobles and abbots by the industry. The export duties on wool constituted one of the principal sources of English revenue. These duties were fixed at a hundred per cent. Their importance may account for the fact that for centuries no weaving industry was created in England to rival that of Flanders, though a piece

[1] K. Hölbaum, *Hansisches Urkundenbuch*, Vol. III. p. 390.

of cloth was worth eight times as much as the wool from which it was manufactured. It was not trade rivalry but political causes which threatened the existence of the thousands of Flemish weavers whose occupation depended on England's will. The looms of Flanders stood idle when the exportation of wool from England was stopped. The Flemish weavers, whose ranks were always crowded, lived from day to day. Turbulent and rebellious, poor, without organization, they wandered from town to town, seeking employment. On Monday mornings they were seen in the markets, in the city squares, outside the churches, anxiously waiting the coming of employers who engaged them by the week. On weekdays, the workklok of the churches summoned them to work, and rang at the short intervals for meals, and the close of the day's labour. On Saturdays the artisans were paid. Municipal ordinances decreed that they should be paid in cash, but the evils of the truck system existed. Weavers, fullers, and dyers formed a class apart, known by their coarse clothing and their blue knuckles. They were looked on as inferiors. Their labour was indispensable to the prosperity of the country, but none hesitated to treat them individually with harshness, for fresh hands were always to be found to fill the places of those who emigrated to France or Austria, or were driven out by the employers.

The moment the supply of English wool was cut off the immense population of artisans dependent on the cloth trade was reduced to starvation. A lock-out filled streets and country roads with crowds of brawny beggars. The most powerful



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BRUGES; THE QUAY, VERT ROSAIRE AND BELFRY

weapons in the hands of the English kings were the wool trade regulations. Notwithstanding the loss entailed thereby to English commerce, Edward I did not hesitate, when political necessity arose, to prohibit the export of wool to Flanders. By means of stopping the wool trade, in 1274, he forced the Flemish to capitulate after a struggle of three months. England and Flanders had quarrelled since 1270; but the friendship, not the ruin of Flanders was what England desired. Since the loss of Normandy, England's route for the invasion of France lay through Belgium, and Bruges was the best port for the disembarkment of an English army. By common accord the two countries forgot their quarrels, and in 1294 a treaty was made between Edward I and Gui de Dampierre, Count of Flanders, the most powerful of the Belgian princes, by which Gui's daughter, Philippine of Flanders, was betrothed to the Prince of Wales. No marriage followed the betrothal, for the King of France, Philippe le Bel, seized Philippine and kept her a prisoner in the Louvre until her death in 1306. Nevertheless, the friendship continued between the King of England and the Flemish. Philippe le Bel sought in vain to prevent the sale of English wool in Flanders, and thus damage both England and Flanders. In order to make the Count of Flanders hateful in the eyes of his own subjects Philippe commanded Gui's officials to enforce his decrees against the importation of English wool, but the interests of trade overcame his authority as suzerain. The commerce with England continued uninterrupted, although recalcitrant manufacturers were called upon to pay

enormous fines. In 1297 a fresh treaty was concluded between Edward and Gui, and Edward took the field in Flanders at the head of an English army, but no great fighting followed. The war between France and Flanders was suspended by an armistice, and a treaty of peace concluded between England and France deprived Gui of English support in his final contest with Philippe le Bel. England profited, none the less, by the victory won by the weavers and fullers over France and her partisans at Courtrai in 1302.

The contest which followed the battle of Courtrai lasted eighteen years. The cession of territory to France, which ended it, was ruinous to that country. By the treaty of peace concluded in 1320 the last of the Walloon territories held by Flanders was transferred to France, and the political and linguistic frontiers were, for the first time, made identical. Thereupon the French markets lost touch with Flanders. The trade of Flanders no longer flowed naturally towards France: its tide ebbed to England. Maritime commerce became the principal source of the economic activity of the Low Countries. Bruges first, and later Ghent and Antwerp, centres of commerce, became centres of nationalism. Local patriotism grew greater, the church bells tolled with increased significance when they rang persistent in the ears and memories of the traders and manufacturers of the whole country, calling them to profitable mart in the great Flemish ports. The triumph of the craftsmen at Courtrai, followed by the overthrow of the oligarchy in Flanders, roused the artisans of Brabant and Liége. In Brabant, the people's

rising was harshly suppressed. The Dukes of Brabant, secure in the support of the upper bourgeois, never bent before the populace. In Liége, where the patricians made common cause with the ruling bishops only at the last extremity, the people were triumphant. The trades became masters of the Walloon city, and their council, in which all trades had equal voices, was the most democratic institution known in Belgium in the Middle Ages. In Flanders, itself, French arms reduced the people to submission for a moment, and made the kings of France hateful for long. Charles le Bel was no sooner dead than Guillaume de Deken, Bourgmestre of Bruges, advancing where Jacques van Artevelde was to follow, proposed to Edward III to recognize him as King of France and overlord of Flanders in return for his support to the popular party.

Commercial interests made the citizens of Flanders eager to side with England; but Louis de Nevers, Count of Flanders, remained true to his feudal duty to the French king, and did not hesitate to face ruin in opposing Edward. The first contest of the Hundred Years' War took place on the soil of the Low Countries, on the 11th of November, 1337, when English soldiers flung themselves into the island of Cadzant, and cut in pieces the Flemish troops placed there to defend the coast. In the following July, Edward, escorted by four hundred ships, sailed up the Scheldt, and disembarked at Antwerp. Louis de Nevers went to the extreme length of prohibiting commerce with England. In doing so he roused his subjects against himself, and played into the hands of

Edward, who promised, in order to gain the support of Brabant, that English wool would be discharged at Antwerp, in future, instead of at Bruges.

Aided by Guillaume of Hainaut, his father-in-law, who was also father-in-law of the Emperor, Louis of Bavaria, Edward obtained the title of Vicar of the Empire, and entered into alliances with the Duke of Brabant, and other Belgian princes, still nominal feudatories of the Empire. Little efficacious support came from Brabant, however, and, a year having passed in negotiations at Antwerp, followed by a sterile display on the French frontier, Edward turned a ready ear to the proposals of the Flemish citizens. Bruges and Ypres had been dismantled and disarmed after 1328: it was at Ghent the starving people raised the standard of revolt. There they set up a revolutionary government under five captains, the foremost of whom was Jacques van Artevelde, a rich citizen of middle age, whom legend describes as a brewer.

Jacques van Artevelde and his fellows sought food for the famishing people, gold for their emptying coffers. They would have kept apart from the struggle between Valois and Plantagenet if they could. They succeeded, in June 1338, in obtaining letters from the kings of England and France by which each of the sovereigns allowed the Flemish free commerce in his states and in the states of his adversary, and engaged not to cross Flanders with his army; but neutrality was impossible in Flanders. To win his people's support for France Louis de Nevers obtained concessions for them from Philippe le Bel, and condescended to flatter

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the Gantois by appearing in their colours in the ranks of the deputation they sent, as customary, in September 1338, to the great procession of Tournay. These efforts were fruitless. The Gantois thought England would secure to them the commercial supremacy of their city, and in the commencement of 1339 Artevelde resolved on a formal alliance with Edward III. Finding the people intractable, Louis de Nevers fled to Paris, whereupon, at Artevelde's suggestion, Simon van Halen, a Lombard banker, who was married to a natural sister of the Count's, was chosen to carry on the government, and, in the name of the absent prince, treaties were made by Flanders with the Duke of Brabant and the Counts of Holland and Hainaut. These treaties were made in accord with Edward III, whose interests were furthered by the alliance of his Lotharingian and Flemish allies. The treaties provided for mutual aid against aggression, freedom of commerce, unification of the monetary system, and the constitution of courts of arbitration. Such treaties were not new amongst the Belgian states, whose commercial needs drew them constantly more closely together. Made at the moment of the flight of Louis de Nevers, the treaties of 1339 were equivalent to a declaration of war against France.

In the eyes of the Flemish, Edward III appeared the greatest prince in Christendom. Commercialists, they whispered that a word from him could ruin their trade; mystics, they spoke of the marvels of his inexhaustible treasury, and of the glories of his crown, the brightness of the carbuncles in which dissipated the darkness of night. Jacques

van Artevelde owed his ascendancy in Flanders to the friendship of the English king, a friendship so close, it is said to be impossible to discover whether the king instigated the burgher's movements, or the burgher those of the king.

Supported, possibly instigated, by the Flemish burgher, Edward III assumed the title and arms of King of France, in Ghent, on the 26th of January, 1340, on the Marché de Venredi, the city's historic square, where he received the homage of the municipalities of the three great towns of Flanders, and, his hand on the Bible, swore to maintain their rights and independence.

Edward III remained faithful to the Flemish, and their country profited by the victories gained by England over France in the Hundred Years' War; but Flanders was only a square on the board on which England played, and, in spite of the friendship of the English sovereign, Jacques van Artevelde was no more than a pawn. He fell, a victim to his fellow-citizens' suspicions, and the great game went on unchecked.

The ties which bound Belgium to France grew weaker and more weak as disasters swept over France during the Hundred Years' War. At the same time the lesser principalities in Belgium became merged in the greater ones, and the line of demarcation traced at Verdun was gradually blotted out. In the fourteenth century the older dynasties died out in the direct lines, and their states passed by inheritance to three foreign houses. The House of Luxembourg became ruler of Brabant, while retaining Luxembourg; Bavaria ruler of Holland, Zealand, Hainaut, and Liége;

and Burgundy, of Flanders and Artois. Of these Luxembourg first disappeared before the efforts of its rivals, and the political genius of Philippe le Bon triumphed over the second. In the middle of the fifteenth century all the lay principalities of the Low Countries, except Gueldreland, acknowledged the Grand Duke of the Occident as their hereditary prince, and the ecclesiastical states of Cambrai, Liége, and Utrecht, the bishops of which were members of his family, were placed under that prince's protection.

By these changes the work of centuries was completed. A new state appeared on the map between France and Germany, not only precursor, but direct and legitimate ancestor of the modern kingdoms of Belgium and Holland. The political organization created by the Burgundian dukes in Belgium remained the basis of that country's national institutions until the end of the old *régime*. Amidst the changes of kingdoms and dynasties Belgium was neither absorbed nor annexed, until the French revolution, and then her annexation to France was but momentary. By the marriage of Mary of Burgundy with Maximilian of Austria the sceptre of Belgium passed into the hands of the Hapsbourgs. It was as heirs of Burgundy that the Kings and Emperors of Spain and Austria ruled over the Low Countries.

Commerce and industry flourished under the Burgundian rule. Traders were encouraged to settle in Antwerp, a town whose citizens could raise no cry of privilege against new-comers. The splendid court of Burgundy was the home of all the arts. There Walloons and Flemings worked

side by side, giving expression to their rich and varied national culture. The Burgundian supremacy rested on the people's will. The risings which the dukes suppressed with unrelenting harshness were those of citizens fighting for the maintenance of old powers of exaction against those outside their close boroughs, not of men struggling for freedom against tyrants.

Beyond doubt, the Dukes of Burgundy aimed at absolutism. Having conquered Liége they imposed a severe government on its citizens. They broke the privileges of the great towns; but the centralized organization they set up was more equitable than what they destroyed. They established justice for all, great and small. Of what they took from the minority they gave largely to the majority. They created councils of justice, and courts of appeal presided over by immovable judges. Their taxes, if heavy, were better and more equitably distributed than the taxes of their predecessors; under their rule the privileges of nobles and clergy with regard to taxation disappeared. In 1463 Philippe le Bon summoned delegates to his council from all his provinces, thus creating the States-General, which in succeeding centuries filled an important rôle. A Constitution entailing their summons was not accorded: government could be carried on, legally, without the States-General, but they were summoned when financial necessities arose, and the increasing requirements of the State caused them to be frequently convoked.

The successors of the Burgundian dukes laid heavy burthens on the Belgians in obliging them to

take part in the wars of their empires. The Low Countries suffered from, and rebelled against, the narrow despotism of Philip II and the ill-judged liberalism of Joseph II. They were rent by the religious wars in the end of the sixteenth century, and dismembered by France, but, throughout all, the Belgians retained their independence. Their bravery and their industry remained to them. The Belgian peasants fearlessly faced the all-conquering armies of the French Republic. Despite the persecution of the revolutionaries, religion remained unshaken in Belgium. Belgian art survived the darkest days. Commerce and industry, crushed for a time when religious differences made Dutch and Belgians foes, revived when Europe breathed under the empire of Napoleon.

Belgium is not a land in which signs of ruin are allowed to stand. The vestiges which remain there of the Napoleonic era are splendid ones. Napoleon lives in the gratitude of the Belgians as the planner of great things for Antwerp. The glories he dreamt of for that port have been attained. They were already in sight when his empire was overthrown and Belgium united to Holland by the Congress of Vienna. The diplomatists assembled at Vienna had given no heed to the fact that the Belgians preferred independence to union with another State. The Belgians in throwing off the yoke imposed on them taught the world that their country had grown into a nation.

CHAPTER II

THE BELGIAN REVOLUTION

THE Allies joined Belgium to Holland in the year 1814 so as to form again the barrier against France which had been set up by the treaties of Utrecht and Münster. They believed the support of the Belgians was won by the act which opened to them the Meuse, the Rhine and the Scheldt; and secured political and commercial emancipation to their country. There was apparent gain for both Belgium and Holland in the union; Belgium had many things Holland wanted; Holland, in her colonies and her shipping, had what Belgium needed. To the guarantee of the treaties the new king of the Low Countries added promises of equal and paternal government, and hopes of vast development.

In taking possession of the Belgian provinces in July 1814, William I of the Netherlands issued a proclamation to the people in which he declared the consolidation and aggrandizement of Belgium in the interest of the Belgians was a necessary element in the new political system of the Great Powers.

To the Allies Belgium was a barrier, to King William it was the foundation of a Great Power. In his estimation, "Identity of origin, conformity of manners and of language, continuity of terri-

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KING WILLIAM I. OF THE NETHERLANDS

tories, reciprocity of interests all called the Belgians and the Batavians to renew their ancient family ties in founding a powerful state which, extending along the course of the Rhine, would comprehend the Palatinate, have for limits in the south Alsace, Lorraine, and Champagne, and be protected against France by possession of the fortified places from Lille to Sedan, Luxembourg, and Mayence." [1]

King William did not obtain the wider territories he hoped for, although he raised his standing army to nearly a hundred thousand men, including a contingent of Swiss mercenaries six thousand strong, but the Belgian and Dutch principalities, united, had in them all the elements of a great state. There was no reason why their union should not become permanent. The pretensions of King William were founded on fact; there was no unsurmountable racial difference between the peoples united to form the kingdom of the Netherlands. The Flemish were akin to the Dutch; the Walloons stood shoulder to shoulder with the Flemish. The written language of the Flemish was, as it still is, identical with the written language of the Dutch, and the spoken languages differed less from each other than do the dialects of Yorkshire and Devon. French was spoken by every educated person in Belgium and Holland.[2] It was the language of

[1] Baron de Gerlache, *Histoire du Royaume des Pays-Bas*, II. 17, 18.

[2] It would not be correct to describe French as the language of the Walloons, although their language, Walloon, so closely resembles French that it is frequently described as a French dialect. Walloon has a grammar and literature of its own. Even to-day it is not easy for those who do not know the Walloon language to comprehend the French spoken in Walloon districts, so interlarded is it with Walloon words.

the upper classes, and, as such, was used in the Senate of the States-General. There was no religious difference which could not have existed without friction. There were few Protestants in Belgium, but there were many Catholics in Holland. Tolerance would have prevented the most hateful of all dissensions, those of religion. The ambitious sons of Belgium saw ways for vast development opened to them by the union. Free from the yoke of the French Prefects, they had, they thought, full scope for the exercise of their abilities. Fifteen years of tyranny undeceived them. It was neither the Dutch people nor the Belgians who made the union a failure. It was King William I of the Netherlands, and he alone.

King William I was the worst of rulers, a bigoted, well-intentioned, self-willed man. He no sooner mounted the throne of Belgium than, describing himself as the champion of liberty, he trod on the people. Holland possessed a constitution promulgated by the King in March 1814, which guaranteed liberty to the people, but preserved higher prerogatives to the prince than the stadtholders had ever enjoyed. The constitution made provisions for the protection of individual liberty and the rights of property, but was silent regarding ministerial responsibility, trial by jury, and the freedom of the press. It made public instruction a State monopoly and granted privileges to the Reformed religion.

In July 1815 King William was obliged to adhere to the treaty of London of June 1814. He appointed a Royal Commission to prepare a draft of a modified constitution, in accordance with the

terms of that treaty, the first article of which laid down that the reunion of Belgium and Holland should be definite and complete in such a fashion that the two countries would form a single kingdom governed by the constitution already adopted in Holland, modified by common accord to fit the new circumstances. Impartial, King William named twelve Protestants and twelve Catholics to sit on the commission, with a Dutch Jew as secretary. The opening of the commission was inauspicious. At its sessions difficulties were avoided rather than surmounted; as in the case of the proposed selection of a capital, when none was chosen. Its most important decisions were rendered null by the King, who modified the modifications, and struck out the clause which established ministerial responsibility. As modified, the draft was presented for acceptance or rejection to a special sitting of the States-General to which double the ordinary number of members were summoned, and to notables of Belgium chosen from all parts of the country in numbers proportional to the population. The States-General passed a unanimous vote in favour of the acceptance of the modified constitution. Of the Belgian notables, 790 voted for the rejection of the measure, 280 abstained from voting, and 520 voted for its acceptance. By a process of what is described in Belgium as Dutch arithmetic, King William arranged the figures in such a manner as to produce a majority in favour of the adoption of the constitution in Belgium. To the 520 votes for its adoption by Belgian notables he added 280 votes, as if the notables who abstained from voting had voted in

favour of it. From the negative votes he deducted 126, because 126 of the notables who opposed the measure admitted they did so on religious grounds, and religious matters were excluded by the King from the notables' consideration. King William said, that had not religion being improperly introduced these 126 would have voted in favour of the measure; he accordingly added 126 to the total number of the votes in favour of it. This juggling with figures did not increase King William's reputation, but the Belgians were not unwilling to make allowances for him. "We would not dare to blame the King of the Low Countries for the part he took then if there were not other and graver faults to reproach him with," Baron de Gerlache, chief leader of the Belgian Catholics, wrote many years later: "After all, the fundamental law was in vigour during fifteen years without complaint on this head, and the Belgians would never have thought of reproaching the King for the vice of its origin if it had been loyally enforced."

King William's popularity in Belgium grew rather than diminished during the first year of his reign. In it he had little time to do more than make promises. The victory of Waterloo brought glory to his House. The King's eldest son, the Prince of Orange, bore himself bravely in the battle. When he appeared in the Brussels Opera House, after the Allies' victory, he was crowned with laurels, and couplets in his honour were sung upon the stage. Amidst the general delirium, said the papers of the day, when he left the Opera House the people drew him to his palace in the

upper city by gilded ropes attached to his carriage, and crowds lit the hero's way with blazing torches.

Unfortunately, the victory over Napoleon had the effect of increasing King William's pride and accentuating his stubbornness. The King's lack of tact, rather than the intransigeancy of the clergy, forced his difference with the Catholic Church to the front. His revenge on Prince Maurice de Broglie, Bishop of Ghent, for his opposition to the fundamental law was contemptible. No necessity justified the King's action. Dignitaries of the Church, still higher in rank than Maurice de Broglie, were on the King's side in the quarrel. The Archbishop of Malines, Primate of Belgium, supported him, and, doing so, received the Papal benediction.[1] King William's intolerance led him from imprudence to imprudence. Notwithstanding the warning the example of Joseph II afforded, and notwithstanding the boasted freedom of religion under the new constitution, he undertook an educational war against the Catholics, and endeavoured to establish a State monopoly of education in Belgium, lay and clerical.

The Belgians, devoted lovers of their fertile soil, proud inhabitants of great cities, inheritors

[1] M. de Méan was nominated Archbishop of Malines by King William, and took the oath to observe the fundamental law, which Catholics had refused because it bound those who took it to protect all the religious communities in the State, non-Catholic as well as Catholic. M. de Méan announced, on the 18th of May 1817, that in taking the oath he swore to protect the religious communities in their civil state, that the oath he took in no way bound him directly or indirectly to approve of their religious doctrines. The Pope thereupon preconized the Archbishop-designate, and sent the Bulls for his installation, and all the Catholics hastened to take the oath "in the sense of M. de Méan."—Gerlache, *op. cit.*, II. 72.

of noble traditions, were confident of their abilities and their resources; they remembered the long line of victories in which they had participated from Courtrai to Waterloo; knowing themselves amongst the conquerors, they were indignant at being treated as a vanquished race. Their population was greater than that of Holland by a million and a half; they had expected an equal if not preponderating share in the government of the kingdom of the Low Countries. They were excluded from the offices of honour and emolument, not nominally, but in fact. Four-fifths of the officers who held commission in the army of the Low Countries were Dutch. The towns and villages of Belgium were crowded with Dutch officials, the burthen of the Dutch debt was imposed on Belgium, as was that of new taxes, by which the Dutch alone profited. Industry and commerce, it is true, were encouraged and advanced by King William, who was an excellent man of business. The prosperity of the manufacturers and traders of Antwerp and Ghent increased, under the rule of the Dutch King, but everywhere in Belgium, in town and country, the poorer classes groaned beneath intolerable exactions. On every living animal that entered a city's gate a poll-tax was levied, on every beast killed in an abattoir a further tax was charged. In like manner flour paid a double duty, at the mill and at the city gate. It was famine, created by misgovernment, that forced the Belgians to revolt. "The Belgian Revolution," says Godefroi Kurth, "was the work of the petite bourgeoisie of the towns, both Flemish and Walloon, who with the whole nation repro-

bating the tyranny of strangers, had recourse one fine day, under the influence of the French Revolution of July, to a revolutionary process to put an end to a detested *régime*. The clergy had nothing to say to it; without doubt the Belgian clergy had also serious griefs against the Dutch *régime*, but they confined themselves to pacific protestations, and in the commencement refused even to join in signing a general petition which was the first indication of the gravity of our national resentments. And if the Walloons have taken a considerable rôle in our national revolution, their rôle in no way excluded that of the Flemings. It is admitted that Rogier was a Walloon, but Louis de Potter was Flemish, and no one contributed more to the revolution than he. Without doubt the revolution was a movement of reaction against obligatory Neerlandais,[1] but only in a feeble degree, and the Flemish shared in that reaction as well as the Walloons." [2] Those who murmured against King William's rule in Brussels, were urged to revolution by French refugees. The Brussels rising was planned in a cabaret, Le Doux, in the rue de l'Ecuyer.[3]

On the 25th of August, 1830, Auber's opera, the *Muette de Potici*, was performed in the Brussels Opera House La Monnaie. A revolutionary scene

[1] Neerlandais: that is, the Dutch language. Obligatory Dutch was a hardship on the Flemish population, for though the written languages of Flanders and Holland were alike, the uneducated peasants of Flanders could not make their patois clearly understood by the Dutch, and themselves could not clearly understand Dutch.

[2] Godefroi Kurth, *La Question Flamande*, p. 2.

[3] H. Carton de Wiart, *L'Evolution intellectuelle e morale de la bourgeoisie belge depuis* 1830.

occurs in the opera, with a song, urging to combat. Of this song, the audience, rising in a body, took up the refrain. The last stanza ended—

"A mon pays je dois la vie
Il me devra sa liberté!"

Singing this, all in the house rushed forth. Crowds joined them in the narrow streets of the old city. The gunsmiths' shops were rifled of their arms, the houses of Dutch officials were pillaged. In a moment the tranquil shopkeepers of Brussels were transformed into armed insurgents. The police and soldiers sent to suppress the rioting looked for the people in the streets where they were not. One encounter only took place between the soldiery and people, in which five men were killed. With that small loss the rioters of a night found themselves their country's regents on the morrow.

France had shown the way to freedom. The new French Government guaranteed the widest liberty. The Belgians forgot the previous tyranny of France. The most ostensibly ardent of those who were in Brussels the day the revolt took place looked for an immediate union with France; those who rushed forth from the opera house to deliver their country desired a French king, and close alliance with France. The Dutch colours were torn down, and in their stead the French tricolor was raised on the Hôtel de Ville and on the houses of the citizens.

On the morrow of the rising the chief citizens of Brussels met at the Hôtel de Ville. Men of substance, they were determined to allow of no mob rule. They appointed what was in fact a Council

of Regency. They equally with the excited artisans were determined to bear King William's despotism no longer, but they hoped an arrangement for the separation of the Belgian and Dutch administrations, placing the government of Belgium in the hands of Belgians, would be come to without bloodshed. They removed the French flag, and replaced it by the ancient tricolor of Brabant, the flag, red, yellow, and black, which is to-day the standard of Belgium.[1] There were Dutch troops still in Brussels, holding the royal palaces, and in the fortified places of Belgium, but the people in their enthusiasm took no heed of any opposition to their movement. The Council of Regency enrolled a strong force of citizen soldiers. At the same time it drew up a statement of the country's grievances, and sent a deputation to the Hague to present it to King William. Their proposal was that separate governments should be set up for Belgium and Holland, Belgium being governed by the Prince of Orange, as Viceroy.

The Prince of Orange had not lost all the popu-

[1] The French Government was informed of this by a dispatch from its representative in Brussels, the Marquis de la Moussaye, written on the 5th of September, 1830. M. de la Moussaye wrote: "Un des incidents les plus remarquables du soulèvement de la Belgique, est la promptitude avec laquelle le premier élan qui se dirigeait vers la France a été comprimé et les couleurs locales substituées au drapeau tricolore." The French envoy did not understand the full significance of this act, for he went on to say: "Pour expliquer cette apparente contradiction il faut savoir que si des anciens souvenirs et des affections très réelles portent une grande partie de la population à souhaiter la réunion au territoire française, des puissantes interêts s'opposent à cette réunion."—Poullet, "Rélations inédites sur les débuts de la Révolution Belge de 1830," *Revue Générale* (1897), p. 792.

larity which his bravery at Waterloo, and his preference for Brussels to the Hague had gained him in the early days of his father's reign. His chance of ruling over the Belgians was not yet gone. He arrived in Belgium while the negotiations were being carried on with the Hague, and took up his residence at Laeken, whence it was easy for him to treat with the citizens of Brussels, while keeping in touch with his brother, Prince Frederick, who lay encamped with six thousand Dutch troops at Vilvorde, eight miles from the capital. At Laeken the Prince of Orange had interviews with the Belgian leaders, in which he showed himself no diplomatist. For a childish reason he insulted the Belgian emissaries, who presented themselves before him with due deference. He announced he would enter Brussels, and demanded that the revolutionary colours of Brabant should be lowered before he entered, and those of Holland raised again. His demand was not complied with. Nevertheless the Prince entered Brussels with a small suite, and rode through the streets crowded by armed men, passing many barricades. Everywhere the colours of Brabant were flaunted before him. He was hooted on the Place de la Monnaie and followed by an excited crowd. As he rode out of the Place de la Monnaie, the Belgian officers who had escorted him from the city gates begged him to enter the Hôtel de Ville, but the Prince, fearing the threatening attitude of the people, refused. He put his horse at a barricade at a corner of the Grand Place, jumped it, and galloped to his palace in the Upper Town, where angry scenes, discreditable

to royalty, took place between him and his Belgian escort.

Years afterwards Talleyrand asked the Prince why he had not entered the Hôtel de Ville and allowed the notables there assembled to proclaim him head of the Belgian Government as they undoubtedly would have done. The Prince had no reply to give except that implied in the question of what France would have done. "We would have cried out like the devil," said Talleyrand, "but you would have been King, nevertheless."

By bolting from the Grand Place in fury instead of entering the Hôtel de Ville the Prince of Orange lost his chance with the Belgians. The negotiations he carried on with them in Brussels were fruitless. He could not prevail on the people to look on him in any other light than that of his father's agent. Finally, he left Brussels on the 3rd of September, carrying with him a formal statement of the Belgians' demand, which he promised to urge the King to accede to. On leaving Brussels he withdrew the Dutch troops from the city and sent them to join the forces commanded by Prince Frederick.

As might have been expected, all attempts to negotiate with King William were fruitless. He had a horror of bloodshed, he said, but Europe would laugh at him if he made concessions to rebellious subjects. He scoffed at trial by jury as a relic of barbarism fit only for England, scoffed at the liberty of the press; scoffed at ministerial responsibility; above all he scoffed at the idea of a constitutional monarchy. Months before he had expressed his opinions to Baron de Gerlache, the

leader of the Belgian Catholics. "You want to make me a constitutional King," he said, "like one of those pagan gods 'qui os habent et non loquuntur; qui pedes habent et non ambulant.'"

William of Nassau was impossible as King of free Belgium. Nevertheless, the Belgian deputies attended the special session of the States-General which was summoned to consider the situation. King William put a couple of questions to the "Noble and Puissant Seigneurs," whom he treated as so many pawns, the chief of which was: "Has experience indicated the necessity of modifying our national institutions?"; which meant: "must the separation of the Belgian administration from that of Holland be allowed?" After many days' debate the question was answered in the negative by a majority of six, fifty voting "No," and forty-four "Yes."

The deliberations of the States-General served no other purpose than that of allowing the Belgians time to organize their defence. Had Prince Frederick advanced on Brussels in the early days of September, with the troops he had under his command at Vilvorde, he might easily have overpowered the raw citizen soldiers, and saved the situation, if not for his father, at least for his brother. By waiting until the end of September, when news arrived of the resolutions come to at the Hague, he gave the Belgians the time they needed to prepare for their defence. Having previously announced his intention by proclamation, he forced an entry into Brussels on the 23rd of September, and led his troops to the park which lies between the Royal palace and the Palace of

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BARON DE GERLACHE, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL CONGRESS

Parliament. He marched into a trap. Barricades stopped the streets. The houses on every side were filled by Belgian volunteers who as long as daylight lasted kept up a continuous fire on the soldiers in the park. The undrilled revolutionists had the advantage in every contest which took place at barricades and in narrow streets. For them every house was an ambush. The Dutch regulars, pent up in the park, would have been annihilated, or forced to lay down their arms, were it not that the citizen soldiers of Brussels considered that fighting was a business to be carried on during business hours only. Every evening, after a day's work spent bravely on the barricades, the volunteers left their posts, returned to their homes, or went to their accustomed cafés to spend the evening in tranquillity. Taking advantage of this, after three days' fighting, during which he lost fifteen hundred men, Prince Frederick stole out of Brussels on the night of the 26th, carrying his wounded with him in carts; and when the Belgians returned to their posts in the morning there was not an enemy to be found to fire upon.

The Belgians were at last undisputed masters of their capital. Regarding their victory over the Dutch as decisive, they directed their chief energies to the framing of a constitution, and the election of a ruler.

CHAPTER III

THE FRAMING OF THE CONSTITUTION

THE members of the Provisionary Government were chiefly lawyers and politicians. Instead of profiting by the discouragement and disorganization of their foes, pursuing Prince Frederick on his retreat, and seizing Maestricht and the territories on the left bank of the Scheldt, which they claimed for Belgium, they occupied themselves with reorganizing the civil administration, promulgating decrees which guaranteed every liberty conceivable to the Belgian people, and summoning a parliament.

"Everything the Belgian opposition had attacked was demolished in a few days," said Baron de Gerlache. "All that had been sought for unavailingly under the preceding *régime* was enthusiastically decreed in a few lines. Grievances real or supposed, grievances old or new, grievances of Catholics and Liberals were redressed the moment they were mentioned. It was in the midst of the most violent access of revolutionary fervour that the foundations of the future government were laid."

The Powers, assembled at the Congresses of London and Vienna, had remade the map of Europe without giving the slightest attention to the wishes of the peoples of whose liberties they disposed. They acted on the theory put forward

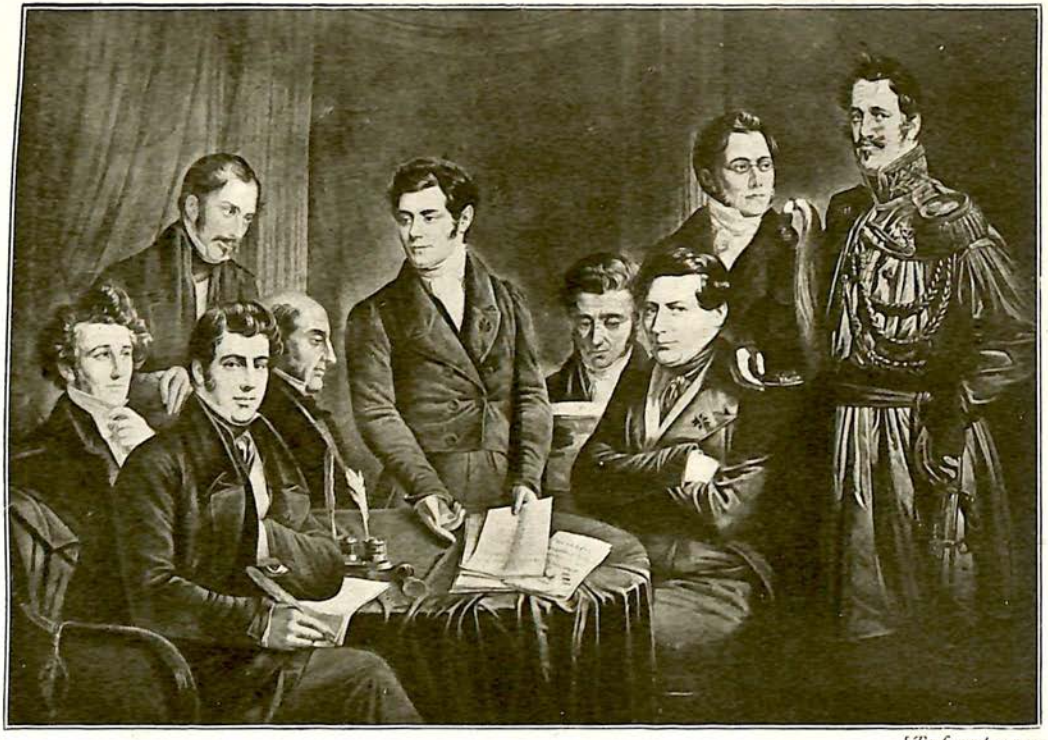
by Metternich that they had the right to intervene in the internal affairs of other states in order to preserve the general peace or sustain the balance of power. Belgium in separating herself violently from Holland on the morrow of the July revolution was disturbing the peace, and destroying the barrier the congresses had built so skilfully against France, at the very moment when that barrier should prove useful. Moreover, there was every indication that the Belgians, not content with pulling down the defences set up by the autocratic states against France, were actually flinging themselves into the arms of that revolutionary country. Immediately, the hands of every autocrat were raised in horror. Intervention was threatened from every side. The very day the rising took place in Brussels, Prussia, forewarned by her diplomatic agents, had an army massed on the frontier, ready to march to King William's aid. Russia promised to send sixty thousand men against the rebels. Metternich, speaking for Austria, went so far as to promise to put two hundred thousand men in the field. England, whose Prime Minister at the moment was the Duke of Wellington, chief fabricator of the Kingdom of Holland, spoke fire and fury, through the mouth of the King, in the King's speech from the throne at the opening of Parliament. Having referred to "the enlightened administration" of the King of Holland, and deplored the fact that "the prudent measures" of that king should have "led to his subjects revolting," the King of England declared: "Obliged to respect the faith of national engagements, I am persuaded that my determination to maintain with my allies

the general treaties in virtue of which the political system of Europe has been established assures the best security for the peace of the world."

None of these hostile plans and threats moved the Belgians. They seem to have believed that Holland, already conquered, would never dare face them in the field again. They had flung themselves into the arms of France, and France, while declaring diplomatically for non-intervention, to use Louis Philippe's phraseology, had given them in private such guarantees that they felt confident they might snap their fingers at all the rest of Europe.

The independence of Belgium was proclaimed on the 4th of October, when the Provisional Government decreed: "The Provinces detached by force from Holland shall constitute an Independent State." On the 6th of October a commission was formed to organize a new mode of election, "the most popular possible." On the 10th the National Congress, consisting of two hundred notables, elected directly by the people, was summoned to meet within a month. On the 12th every existing decree against the freedom of education was repealed. On the 16th freedom of association and freedom of religion were decreed. In fact, every day brought new decrees of freedom. Amongst the evils abolished were theatrical censorship and flogging in the army.

Foremost amongst those who framed the decrees was a journalist, Louis de Potter, whose brave fight with his pen against King William's misrule had done much to rouse the Belgians. Louis de Potter had suffered severely at the hands of the



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THE PROVISIONARY GOVERNMENT

Names, reading from left to right—

Standing—Jolly, S. Van de Weyer, J. Van der Linden, Baron E. d'Hooghvorst.

Sitting—A. Gendebien, G. Rogier, L. de Potter, Baron F. de Coppin, Count F. de Mérode.

Dutch governors of Belgium. Thrown into prison again and again, he had never ceased to pour forth denunciations against the oppressors, even issuing pamphlets from his prison cell. He had been driven into exile at last, and his return from exile, when Brussels was evacuated, was a triumphal march. Cheering crowds lined the roads he passed along. The gates of the towns flew open; citadels held by the Dutch surrendered as he approached. At Brussels his carriage was lifted on the people's shoulders over the barricades, and he was escorted by a multitude frenzied with joy into the Hôtel de Ville, and led from window to window, that he might harangue the thousands surging in the streets below. The Provincial Government was sitting. Immediately, he was coöpted a member of that body. The popular journalist was a republican. To his excited mind it seemed inevitable that the next move of the people who had proclaimed Belgium a free country would be to proclaim a Republic, and elect him its first President. His misjudgment and his ambition ruined him. He fought with his colleagues in the Provisionary Government, although they humoured his ambition as far as possible, and he committed some acts of tyranny which turned the people against him so greatly that forty-seven days after his triumphal entry into Brussels, he fled from the country he had roused to freedom, considering it no longer safe for him to live within its confines.

Beside the enthusiasts who promulgated decrees while the force to sustain them was still lacking, there were serious workers who did all that could be done to advance their country's cause. The

majority of the Government believed Belgium's only safety lay in France. Foremost was Alexander Gendebien, who set out for Paris on the 28th of September, two days after the Dutch evacuated Brussels, to lay what he believed to be the views of the whole Belgian people before Louis Philippe. These views were simple. Belgium was ready for immediate annexation by France. Failing that, the Belgians wished to arrange a period of transition leading to annexation: a monarchy under the nominal rule of one of the younger sons of the King of the French, the Duc de Nemours, a prince sixteen years of age, for preference.

Gendebien had no regular credentials on this first visit of his as Belgian envoy to Paris. The Provisionary Government had scarcely been shaped when he started hot-foot to offer Belgium to France. This pleased Louis Philippe, who at the moment the Belgian revolution had fallen "like a tile on his head," to quote the Duke de Broglie, had not quite decided on what policy he would assume to attain the end he had already in view of making Belgium force herself on him, seemingly against his will. To the unofficial envoy he was able to convey a multitude of promises, to none of which he could be pinned down afterwards. New as he was in practice, as a king, to the arts he perfected later at the time of the Spanish marriages, Louis Philippe succeeded in convincing Gendebien that all Belgium desired France would give her. The hinted promises of the King were turned into firm and enthusiastic pledges by the leaders of the "Party of the Movement," the strong revolutionary gang, who having pulled down

Charles X and set up the Citizen King, were spreading the flames of revolution all over Europe. Gendebien was too ardent an admirer of everything connected with the July revolution in France to doubt Louis Philippe; but he relied on the Party of the Movement more strongly than the King. From Paris he wrote that a means of securing the armed support of France would be to invite not only the King, but the French nation itself to nominate a French prince to the Belgian throne. On his return to Brussels he inspired his colleagues with his confidence in France, so much so that, although events were marching rapidly, they disdained to seek the support of any other Power, and defied the Conference of London.

Some negotiations there were with the Prince of Orange, who, in disgrace with King William, and out of favour with the Dutch because of his leanings towards Belgium, came to Antwerp in the hope of gaining the Belgian allegiance. The Prince damaged his own cause and his father's by promising at once too little and too much. After a short stay he left Antwerp, as yet admitting no defeat, to carry on his negotiations in London, where plenipotentiaries were gathering for the Conference which was to decide the fate of Belgium.

Antwerp was still held by the Dutch. Their flag waved over the citadel of that great port. Outside its walls there lay the Dutch troops which had withdrawn from Brussels, and the other military stations of the country. The Belgians marched against these troops.

Its civilian chiefs fondly believed their army to be in a state of efficiency. Besides native troops, it

contained a French Legion "formed of heroes of the July Revolution," and a "London Legion" which lacked nothing, save a few Englishmen.[1] Towards the end of October this army attacked the Dutch in a couple of engagements, near Antwerp. In each engagement the Belgians were successful; the Dutch were driven to take refuge, first, within the city walls, and later within the fortifications of the citadel. The victories were, however, rendered dolorous by the loss of two of the most loved leaders of the Belgians: Jenneval, author of the revolutionary song, the Brabançonne, which remains the national anthem of Belgium; and Count Frédéric de Mérode, a member of one of the noblest families of Belgium, who left a lovely chateau in France, where he lived with his young family, to enrol himself as a common soldier amongst his country's ranks.

The citadel of Antwerp was held for King William by General Chassé. This commander had under him six thousand soldiers, within fortifications believed to be well-nigh impregnable. In the harbour lay Dutch men-of-war whose guns could rake the whole of the commercial metropolis of Belgium. General Chassé indignantly refused to surrender to the Belgians, when the city gates were flung open to them by the populace; and, although some agreement had been come to for a suspension of arms, he ordered the city to be bombarded. For seven hours a continuous fire was poured forth from the citadel, the forts, and the Dutch flotilla. The bonded warehouses, the largest on the Continent, which contained stores of immense value,

[1] Baron de Gerlache, *op. cit.*

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ANTWERP; THE QUAYS AND CATHEDRAL

were burned to the ground. The Church of Saint Michael, and many other public buildings were destroyed. The Cathedral was threatened. The Belgians declared the fire of their barbarous enemies was directed straight upon it. They sent more than one deputation under a flag of truce to General Chassé to entreat him to spare the edifices which were the glory of their common race. At length, at half-past ten o'clock on the night of the 27th of October, the bombardment ceased. It is not certain whether General Chassé ordered its cessation on humanitarian or æsthetic grounds, or because he had run short of ammunition.

Belgium was filled with horror at the news of these happenings at Antwerp. The whole country united in crying out that reconciliation was no longer possible. A river of fire and blood, the people declared, for ever separated them from King William and his dynasty.

On the day after the bombardment the draft of the proposed Constitution for Belgium, prepared by a commission of jurisconsults, was circulated amongst the people. It embodied most of the decrees guaranteeing liberties made by the Provisional Government, and it contained many additional measures intended to secure the people's freedom. It was an admirable work, as is the constitution based on it, even judged by the standard of the present day. Judged in comparison with the laws and charters existing everywhere in Europe when the constitution was made, it is a marvellous work. It guaranteed personal freedom, and the protection of property from arbitrary seizure; religious freedom, with the pro-

viso that the State should interfere in no way with the appointments of the ministers of religion; freedom of education, every parent having the right to have his children educated as he wished; freedom of the press, with protection of individuals from libel by recourse to the common law; freedom of association; inviolability of magistrates, and the right of trial by jury. It insisted on ministerial responsibility; and proposed a monarchical form of government, with two chambers. The National Congress, which examined and adopted the measures here recited, as the Belgian Constitution, met on the 10th of December, held one hundred and twenty-six sittings, and finally dissolved, its work completed, on the 21st of July, 1831. Its most interesting debates turned around the question of the Belgian kingship. Its most exciting moments were those in which it fought against the dictation of the Powers.

The clauses in the constitution regulating the power of the Crown nominally placed the executive power in the King's hands, gave him the rights of initiative, approval, and veto; allowed him to summon, adjourn, or dissolve parliament; execute decrees and acts; superintend the provincial and communal councils, and annul their decrees; but there was such insistence on the necessity of a ministerial countersign, so careful a limitation of the royal veto, those who framed the Constitution, and he who accepted the Belgian crown, thought there was little left for the King to do.

"Our Constitution was veritably a work of reaction," said Gerlache; "throughout it breathed hatred of the past King and fear of the future King.

It snatched from the Crown the faculty of doing good or evil; and the power it refused to it, it scattered to all the world, to the Chambers, the tribunals, the Provincial Councils, the Communes, the smallest village bourgmestre, forgetting that the worst of all despotisms is that which is multiple and comes from below."

The Kings of Belgium were intended to be puppets.

CHAPTER IV

THE INTERVENTION OF THE POWERS

THE Belgians hoped the Powers would stand aside and allow them to settle their affairs without interference. Louis Philippe encouraged them to do so. He declared no power had the right to interfere with the internal affairs of another, but every power had the right to prevent interference, and the French Foreign Minister, who communicated this declaration to the Prussian Ambassador at Paris, intimated that armed intervention by Prussia in Belgium would be looked on by France as a declaration of war.[1] The phrase used by the

[1] Comte d'Haussonville, *Histoire de la politique extérieure du gouvernement français* 1830–1840, I. 21. The Comte d'Haussonville gives a dramatic description of the interview between M. Molé, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the Prussian Ambassador, von Werther. When Molé declared France would look on armed intervention as a declaration of war, Werther replied: "Comment la guerre, mais votre armée française est toute désorganisée, vous ne sauriez réunir quatre régiments." "N'en croyez rien," répondit M. Molé, "vous risqueriez de vous tromper et beaucoup. Nous avons d'excellents régiments qui s'acheminent en ce moment vers le Nord.... La guerre, je vous le répète, est au bout de mes paroles; sachez-le, et mandez-le à votre cour." The Comte d'Haussonville was represented as receiving the account of this interview directly from M. Molé; but German historians question its accuracy. It is certain the intimation that France insisted on non-intervention was conveyed to Prussia, though the French Foreign Minister may not have used so bellicose a tone as represented.

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BRUSSELS; THE PALACE OF JUSTICE

French diplomatists was fabricated to satisfy the Belgians while not alarming the Powers. "Obliged to resist the oppressive action of the Powers in Belgium," said the Duc de Broglie, a formula was searched for which would have a show of the Rights of Man, a sort of diplomatic decency, which would frighten Europe less than any evocation, however veiled, of revolutionary solidarity.[1]

The aim of Louis Philippe was to secure England's alliance, which he believed would make him strong enough to face the other Powers, and bring things to such a pass that the annexation of Belgium, or at least, the cession of the greater part of the Belgian territories to France, would become inevitable. To attain to this, the Citizen King, then commencing his reign as the first constitutional ruler of France, arranged to act behind the back of his Foreign Minister, hoodwink his Government, befool Belgium and deceive the Powers.[2]

In the end of September, Talleyrand went to England, openly as French Ambassador, covertly as King Louis Philippe's personal agent. There was clear understanding between him and the King as to what he was to work for. His corre-

[1] Duc de Broglie, *Souvenirs*, Vol. IV. p. 38. Talleyrand, asked what non-intervention was, replied: "Madame, non-intervention is a diplomatic and enigmatic formula which signifies almost exactly the same thing as intervention."—A. Granville Stapleton, *Intervention and Non-Intervention*, p. 15.

[2] The duc de Broglie, says Molé, saw clearly that from the moment the negotiations commenced in London, and Talleyrand had a hand in them all would be done directly, "entre un si gros bonnet et le roi"; therefore he did all in his power to prevent Talleyrand's appointment. "Être ministre *in partibus* ne convenait certainement pas à un homme de la position et de la partie de M. Molé. Aussi travaillait-il a éloigner de lui ce dégout."—Broglie, *Souvenirs*, Vol. IV. p. 59.

spondence with Louis Philippe was carried on through the intermediary of Madame Adelaide, the King's sister and chief adviser.

Talleyrand's first move was to claim England's adhesion to the principle of non-intervention in the interior affairs of her neighbours. The speech he made on presenting his credentials to William IV, was one he described to Madame Adelaide as being in his old tone of the Constituent Assembly.[1] The declaration that speech contained was wide of the truth. England held no such views on the non-intervention as these enunciated by Talleyrand, speaking "for our King and France." The best description of England's theory was given by Palmerston, who succeeded Aberdeen as Foreign Minister when the Tories fell. "England," he said, "professes non-intervention, but only when this principle does not oblige us to violate treaties or to sacrifice our national interests." [2]

In the opinion of the English Cabinet, non-intervention in the Belgian affair would be both a violation of the treaties made at Vienna, and a sacrifice of England's national interests. Wellington had taken a foremost part at the Congress of Vienna in joining the Belgian provinces to Holland, to create the Kingdom of the Low Countries as a barrier against France. He was determined that all England could do to uphold its work of the Congress should be done. On the very day Talleyrand made his oration on non-intervention England received a note from the King of the Low Countries calling on her, in virtue of her treaty

[1] Talleyrand to Madame Adelaide, 1st of November, 1830.
[2] Stapleton, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

obligations, to dispatch forces to the southern provinces of his kingdom to suppress rebellion there, and intimating that a similar request had been addressed to Prussia, Austria, and Russia and other signatories of the treaties of Vienna. Wellington could not give the aid demanded. The Tory Government was tottering to its fall. Paralyzed by the Reform agitation, it dared not dispatch troops from home to engage in what might develop into a general war. After a fortnight's deliberation, Aberdeen, the Foreign Secretary, replied to the King of the Low Countries that it was not possible to send troops to his aid; but that a Conference of the Great Powers would be summoned to take measures to prevent the troubles which had arisen in the Low Countries from disturbing the general peace.[1]

The proposal to hold a Conference was welcomed by the Powers. Prussia was paralyzed like England by danger at home; serious agitation had broken out in her Rhenish provinces. Austria had rising hatred in Italy to deal with. France chose to consider the summoning of a Conference a triumph of her policy of non-intervention. The Czar of Russia, alone, protested. He announced that he had a large army ready to march the moment the Powers decided on action, and persisted in declaring that in the end force should be used to bring the Belgian insurgents to submission; but he was prevailed upon to take part in the Conference, and to consent to France taking part in it. In doing so, Nicholas I laid down the condition that the

[1] Papers relative to the affairs of Belgium . . . presented to both Houses of Parliament (1833), p. 5.

object of the Conference should be "the pacification of the Low Countries, by means of an alteration in the conditions of the Union of Belgium with Holland, but with the maintenance of the integrity of those states under the dominion of the House of Orange, and with full security of the fortresses which protect their independence." [1]

None of the Powers objected to the conditions of Russia. England, Austria, and Prussia desired, as Russia did, to settle the affair by having the Belgian crown transferred to the Prince of Orange; and France professed a like desire. Louis Philippe was determined to urge the prince's selection in such a manner as to make his success, or that of any other but an Orleans candidate, impossible; but he tried to deceive all as to his intentions. Before the question of who was to rule in Belgium was raised at the Conference, Talleyrand had definite instructions openly to support the prince's candidature.[2]

The Conference sat first on the 4th of November. The Belgians tried to ignore it. It was not until the eve of the assembly that an English friend of Belgium convinced the members of the Provisional Government that their action was unwise in having no diplomatic representative or agent in London. The agent they sent at last, Silvan van de Weyer, arrived in London the day the Conference opened. Later, he proved himself an able diplomatist, but at the moment of his arrival,

[1] Dispatch from Comte Nesselrode to Comte Matuszewic, 19th of October, 1830.—Talleyrand, *Memoirs*, Vol. IV. pp. 363–368.

[2] *Idem*, p. 377.

without sufficient credentials, personally unknown to the statesmen and diplomatists assembled in the English Parliament and at the Conference, he was able to do little.[1]

The work for which the Conference was assembled seemed an easy one. The Belgians had cut themselves free from Holland in order that they might be governed under their own laws, and rid of King William I. The northern Powers and England were content that on these points they should have their way, as long as the general peace was guaranteed. The guarantees they required were the maintenance of the fortresses, and the election of a prince to the throne in whom all could have confidence; in other words, that of the Prince of Orange. France outdid the other Powers in her protestations on these points. "We are met, gentlemen," said Talleyrand, at the opening of the first session, "to preserve the peace." The first step taken to achieve this was the drawing up

[1] Van de Weyer was accused in Belgium of being *un homme de salon*, who easily sacrificed his opinions in his desire to make himself popular in society. Palmerston wrote of him to Talleyrand: "Notre petit ami, comme les dieux de Caton, aime à se trouver du côté des vainquers"; but the very moderation and courtesy with which he was reproached enabled the young Belgian, whom the revolution had unexpectedly brought to a high position, to effect much for his country. Van de Weyer fixed his residence permanently in England and soon gained the confidence of all parties. He and his wife were favourites at the English Court. Madame Van de Weyer continued to reside in England after the death of her husband, and lived to an old age. When she died, Queen Victoria said she had lost in her the last of her intimate personal friends. Parties in Belgium never lost their distrust in Van de Weyer, whom they continually accused of being the agent of England. Their distrust was ill-founded, but in more than one grave crisis it placed serious difficulties in the way of Leopold I.

of a protocol calling on "the respective troops to retire reciprocally behind the line which, before the epoch of the treaty of the 30th of May, 1814, separated the possessions of the sovereign prince of the United Provinces from those which were joined to his territories to form the Kingdom of the Low Countries." [1]

The Dutch Ambassador was present at the sittings of the Conference, in accordance with a regulation made at the Congress of Vienna regarding the presence of the representatives of States whose affairs were under deliberation. Belgium, as yet unrecognized, had no representative at the Congress, and it was resolved by the plenipotentiaries that the "protocol should be made known in Belgium." To make it known, two Commissioners, Mr. Cartwright, an Englishman, and M. Bresson, a Frenchman, were sent to Brussels. In the eyes of diplomatists, the protocol which the Commissioners made known, went far in advancing the cause of the Belgians, since it recognized them as belligerents. In the eyes of the Belgians the fact that the Powers presumed to dictate to them, conquerors of the Dutch, was an insult to be flouted. The members of the Provisional Government appreciated the value of being recognized as belligerents, but for the recognition accorded them they thought they were called upon to pay too high a price. The protocol required them to withdraw from territories they claimed

[1] Pallain, *L'Ambassade de Talleyrand à Londres*, 1830–1834, Introduction, p. xi. The Blue Book already quoted, "Papers relative to Belgium" (1833), contains the protocols of the Conference.

on the left bank of the Scheldt. The first reply they drafted to the communication from the Conference was couched in such terms that the Commissioners refused to receive it. That which the Commissioners accepted was, at least, sarcastic. It stated that the Provisional Government was "glad to believe that very natural sentiments of sympathy for the sufferings of Belgium had determined the entirely philanthropical mission with which the plenipotentiaries of the five Great Powers found themselves charged"; and thanking the Powers for their humanitarian efforts, consented to a total cessation of hostilities; but it stated that the Provisional Government understood the line of division to be that which, according to the fundamental law of the Low Countries, separated the northern provinces from the southern provinces of the country, which included all the left bank of the Scheldt.[1]

The consent of the Belgians to a cessation of hostilities was given on the 10th of November. On the 13th of November the plenipotentiaries again assembled, and Lord Aberdeen proposed to finish the matter at once by placing the Prince of Orange on the Belgian throne. The Belgians' consent to the cessation of hostilities was in the hands of the Conference. There was no reason to doubt that the consent of King William I would be given likewise, for that sovereign had himself requested the Conference to require an armistice. Aberdeen had reason to believe that France would consent to his proposal. Louis Philippe had written a long letter regarding the

[1] Huyttens, *Discussions du Congrès National*, Vol. IV. p. 190.

various personages whose candidature for the Belgian throne was possible, and this letter, written to his Foreign Minister on the 11th of November, had been communicated to Talleyrand the day previous to the sitting at which Aberdeen's proposal was brought forward. In it Louis Philippe said, "The most important question actually is to know if the Prince of Orange can still become Sovereign of Belgium, or if he cannot. If he still can, there can be no doubt but that he must be preferred by France as much as by any other power. . . . All the difficulties would disappear if it were possible to get the National Congress of Belgium to ask for the Prince of Orange as their sovereign."[1]

Notwithstanding this letter, Talleyrand blocked Aberdeen's proposal. He declared any discussion on Belgian affairs would be premature before it was known how the proposal regarding the armistice was received. He had read through the lines of Louis Philippe's letter, and knew any action which might result in the selection of the Prince of Orange was the last thing his master desired.

On the 17th of November, the adhesion of King William I to the suspension of hostilities was received, and the second protocol of the Conference was drawn up. Changes by which France hastened to profit had taken place in Belgium and England since the first sitting of the plenipotentiaries. In Belgium the National Congress was sitting; in England the Tories had fallen, and Lord Grey was

[1] Louis Philippe to Maréchal Maison, 11th of November, 1830. Talleyrand, *op. cit.*, Vol. III. p. 382. Maréchal Maison was Foreign Minister for a few days before the appointment of Sebastini.

forming a Whig Ministry. Talleyrand was not certain whether to rejoice or not at the fall of Wellington; a strong Whig Government might prove a greater obstacle to the designs of France than a weak Tory one; but he rejoiced without any hesitation at the assembly of the Belgian Congress. A large body elected by the people can be played on by appeals to its love or hatred, and roused to heated action more easily than a small council, however patriotic, such as the Provisionary Government. It was in order to get time to play on the National Congress that Talleyrand blocked Aberdeen's suggestion for the transfer of the Belgian Crown to the Prince of Orange.

The sitting of the plenipotentiaries, at which the protocol of the 17th of November was drawn up, lasted far into the night. As communicated to Belgium, it contained two clauses: first, a notification that the King of the Low Countries accepted the armistice proposed on the basis of the protocol of the 4th of November; and that the armistice agreed to on one part and on the other would contain an engagement towards the five Powers, which made a renewal of hostilities impossible without their consent.

A storm of indignation arose in the Belgian National Congress when this protocol was communicated to its members. Both it and the protocol of the 4th of November, which the Provisionary Government had accepted, were loudly attacked as consecrating the principle of intervention by the five Powers, and the principle of *post liminii* of 1790 in favour of Holland. Belgium

was caught in the meshes of a diplomatic net, it was declared. If the dictation of the Conference of London was accepted, Maestricht, the left bank of the Scheldt, and Luxembourg, would be lost. War would have been better than negotiation, even though Prussia came to the aid of Holland, and France was placed in the alternative of disavowing Belgium, or facing the risks of war. For a moment it seemed as if the National Congress was about to reject the proposals of the Conference, and, still confident in France's ultimate support, fling defiance at the other Powers; but Belgian prudence prevailed. On the 20th of November a Diplomatic Committee was formed, to deal with the envoys, and facilitate diplomatic relations. The consideration of the protocol was referred to this committee, and by it adjourned.

The storm seemed likely to subside. Belgium was on the point of entering into communication with the Conference by regular diplomatic means. That country listening to common sense was the last thing Talleyrand desired. He felt a new storm should be raised; forthwith he raised one.

On the 18th of November the National Congress proclaimed Belgium Independent. On the 22nd of the same month, it declared for a constitutional monarchy. On the 23rd a proposal was laid before the Congress to exclude for ever the family of Nassau from power in Belgium. This was Talleyrand's opportunity. The House of Nassau had not lost all its supporters; the Prince of Orange had not been abandoned by all his friends; there were, besides the Orange faction, members of the Congress who thought it undignified or im-

politic to pass a vote excluding from the throne a family already driven from it. These members spoke against the motion of exclusion in a House packed on floor and galleries, amidst the groans and hootings of the public. Crowds gathered in the streets, and swarming on the steps of the Palace of the Nation, jostled and threatened them. Those of the popular party, the immense majority, were, of course, cheered to the echo. The excitement which lasted during two days' debate rose to frenzy on the third, when it became known that two envoys, MM. Brisson and de Langsdorff, had arrived in Brussels that morning to inform the Congress in the name of the five Powers that the exclusion of Nassau might compromise the peace of Europe, and cause a break between Belgium and the governments the support of which it was her interest to seek.

This was dictation undisguised. To prevent a sudden outburst on the part of the people, the President caused the galleries to be cleared before the envoys' message was communicated to the Congress. The message was debated on in secret, and when the public were readmitted, the President announced, "The Congress passes to the order of the day on the communication which has been made to it in the name of the five Powers, and declares itself sitting in permanence until the question of the exclusion is decided."

Notwithstanding the frenzy of all around them, there were still some members who still had the courage to speak against the exclusion. There were others, equally courageous, who declared that they had the intention to vote against the

exclusion, but in the face of the threats of the Powers, would vote for it. The total number of the deputies was two hundred. Eleven were absent when the vote was taken. Of those present one hundred and sixty-one voted for the exclusion of the House of Nassau; and twenty-eight against the exclusion, nine of whom had been members of the Belgian Opposition to the Dutch Government in the States-General.[1]

The whole incident of the message from the Powers was a trick of Talleyrand's to rouse the Belgians against the Conference, ruin the last chances of the Prince of Orange; and he said, prove the good faith of France to the Powers. On the 30th of November he wrote to the French Foreign Minister, Sebastini: "We must congratulate ourselves on the fact that the move made by the Government preceded the declaration of the Congress. That move will without doubt produce the best effect on the different Cabinets of Europe, they must recognize in it the firm proof of our desire to maintain the peace. . . . It is from that point of view that I have always considered the mission of M. de Langsdorff; the interest of the House of Nassau, which was its apparent end, appeared to me to be only secondary. Also I think we need not frighten ourselves too much about the expulsion pronounced against that family." [2]

[1] Gerlache, *op. cit.*, II. 266 *et seq.*

[2] Pallain, *op. cit.*, p. 110. The Ministry to which Comte Molé belonged had fallen on the 1st of November, and was succeeded by the Ministry of which Laffitte, a weak and incapable man, was the head. Louis Philippe succeeded early in having General Comte Sebastini appointed Foreign Minister. Sebas-

Whatever the Cabinets of Europe thought of the move of M. de Langsdorff, two of the real objects of that move were gained; it made impossible the election of the Prince of Orange by Belgium, and roused the Belgians to greater resentment than ever at the intervention of the Conference of London. Louis Philippe and Talleyrand plotted so skilfully, the Belgians retained faith in them at this moment when the threat conveyed by French envoys, regarding the election of a King, roused all Belgium to indignation against the Conference, and even at the latter period when the French King and his agent were planning the dismemberment of Belgium.

For many months the Conference continued its work in London, making protocols, against which Belgium sent note after note of indignant protest. The vote of the Belgian Congress, excluding the House of Nassau, was not looked on by the plenipotentiaries as ending the possibility of the transference of the Belgian Crown to the Prince of Orange. Russia still insisted that none but a Nassau should wear that crown, Nicholas I was mobilizing his army, and Belgium might have become once more a battle-field of nations, had not fate come to the Belgians' aid. The Polish revolution, which broke out at Warsaw on the 29th of November, put an end to the danger of armed interference from Russia. The stubbornness of the Belgians in refusing to comply with the various requirements of the Confer-

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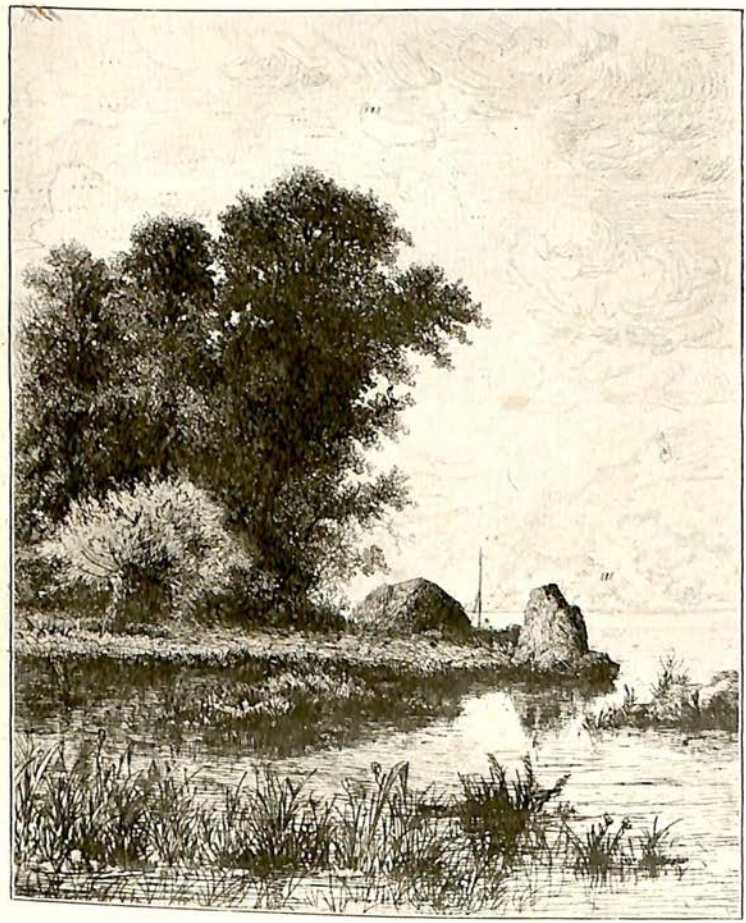
tini's only merit was his blind devotion to the King. He remained at the head of the Foreign Office throughout the rest of the negotiations in London, the useful tool of Louis Philippe and Talleyrand.

ence might yet have caused the Powers to use coercive measures against them, had not William I proved more stubborn and, moreover, stupid. Not only did the King refuse to accept the armistice proposed by the Conference, but he persisted in interfering with the trade of England and others of the great Powers by blockading Antwerp. Such conduct was not to be borne. The Conference softened towards the Belgians. Finding that difficulties and delays were put in the way of carrying out the armistice, the plenipotentiaries declared in a protocol made on the 10th of December, that not only the armistice, but also the suspension of hostilities, contained an engagement towards the Powers, and called on King William immediately to fulfil his engagements, and to cease the blockade of the Scheldt. On receiving communication of this protocol, the Belgians at once adhered to the protocol of the 17th of November, which called for a perpetual armistice between them and Holland. The Dutch King, on his part, continued obdurate, with the result that the Conference made various concessions to Belgium, amongst others giving it the territories in the vicinity of Venloo and Maestricht, and the right to occupy the citadel of Antwerp.

King William was unmoved. He neither evacuated the citadel of Antwerp, nor ceased the blockade. At length the Conference lost patience with him. On the 18th of December, Palmerston proposed the recognition of the independence of Belgium. After three days' long and stormy sittings, his proposal was accepted, and the protocol dated the 20th of December, admitting "Belgium into the



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ETCHING BY H.R.H. THE COUNTESS OF FLANDERS

great European family as an Independent Power," was signed by the plenipotentiaries of the five Great Powers. The interference of the Conference was far from being ended here. The protocol of the 20th of December having declared Belgium free, added that country was still bound to fulfil its part of the European duties of the Kingdom of the Low Countries, and its treaty obligations towards the other Powers, and stated the Conference would consequently occupy itself by concerting new arrangements to combine the future independence of Belgium with these obligations, continuing negotiations with the King of the Low Countries, and inviting Belgium to send Commissioners to London, furnished with sufficiently ample instructions to be consulted and heard on all points. Finally, the protocol declared that the recognition of Belgian Independence did not alter the rights of the King of the Low Countries over Luxembourg.

Neither Belgium nor Holland accepted the proposals contained in the protocol. King William addressed a note directly to the Conference, protested against the protocol, and against the whole proceedings of the Conference. "The Conference of London," he wrote, "assembled, it is true, at the desire of the King, but that circumstance gave no right to the Conference to give its protocols a direction opposite to that for which its assistance had been asked, and, instead of co-operating in re-establishing order, to lead up by them to the dismemberment of the kingdom."

Belgium replied to the protocol by a note drawn up on the 3rd of January, in which it was declared it seemed impossible for the country to constitute

an independent state without the immediate guarantee of the freedom of the Scheldt, the possession of the left bank of that river, of the entire province of Limbourg, and of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, subject to its relations to the Germanic Confederation.

This note was returned to the Belgian Government by order of the Conference, because "it tended to establish the right of aggrandizement and conquest in favour of Belgium, and the Powers could not recognize a right of any State which they refused to themselves; and because on this mutual renunciation, the general peace and the European system reposes to-day."

After this, things continued for some weeks as they had been before. The Conference interfered several times by protocol with both Belgium and Holland, and Belgium and Holland disregarded the interference. The Belgians threatened Maestricht, the Dutch kept up their blockade, and remained entrenched in the citadel of Antwerp. Already, in November, according to his *Memoirs*, Talleyrand received from M. de Flahaut, an emissary of the French Cabinet, a suggestion for the solution of the Belgian question, which emanated from M. de Celles, Vice-President of the Diplomatic Committee of the Belgian Government, and others of the French party in Belgium, and was approved by the French Foreign Minister. This was the partition of Belgium, a part of which country was to be left to the King of the Low Countries, and a part given to Prussia, the largest part to France, and Antwerp, with the Scheldt from that

city to the mouth of the river, to England.[1] It was not, however, partition, but annexation that France and the French party in Belgium desired. Surlet de Chokier, President of the National Congress, and later, Regent of Belgium, M. de Celles, Vice-President of the Diplomatic Committee, and M. Gendebien, led the French Party in Belgium. The high positions of these politicians, the loudly-voiced enthusiasm of their followers—the Francophile Walloons make fifty times as much noise as the phlegmatic and determined Flemings—easily led the French King and his Government to believe, as they wished to believe, that all Belgium desired annexation. The annexation of Belgium was no new idea sprung up in France with the July Revolution. Under Charles X, Polignac had proposed it as part of an elaborate plan he drew up for the reshaping of Europe on the expected fall of the Turkish Empire. In the Council at which this plan was discussed, the Dauphin had objected that England would never consent to Antwerp falling into the hands of France. "That only proves," replied Polignac, "that we must have Antwerp." According to his plan, England's consent was to be won by the cessation to her of the Dutch Colonies.[2] It was the

[1] Talleyrand, *op. cit.*, III. 411. Belgian historians question the truth of Talleyrand's statement, and say the suggestion of partition came from himself, not from any Belgian source. Celles, they point out, asked the Belgian Congress, on the 17th of November, to pass a vote declaring that "Belgium should not be made again additional territory for Holland, or for any other country, notably France."

[2] *Memoirs of Baron Stockmar*, I, p. 139.

fear of English opposition, because of Antwerp, that had prevented France from annexing Belgium at the commencement of the Belgian Revolution, and led Louis Philippe to play falsely at the Conference, pretending disinterestedness even to his own tools and accomplices. It was not until the Conference recognized Belgium as an Independent State that the French plotters began to write openly of their schemes to each other. On the 30th of December, the French Foreign Minister, Sebastini, wrote to Talleyrand, suggesting a plan for satisfying England's fears, and obtaining her consent to the annexation.

"The Belgians in the totality," he wrote, "desire that their country should be united to France, or that the duc de Nemours should be called to reign over them. To obtain this important result they would voluntarily consent to Antwerp becoming a Free Town, and would, perhaps, go to the same length for Ostend. France will see in the reunion of Belgium, or in the choice of the duc de Nemours, a just reparation for the past and tranquillity for the future. . . . Your experience, your consummate wisdom will enlighten us on what it is possible to do with the consent of the Great Powers. Does England still follow a narrow and jealous policy?" [1] A few days later, Sebastini again wrote to Talleyrand: "The Belgians are profoundly convinced that they cannot be a nation independent and separated from France. France shares this conviction." And on the same day, the 3rd of

[1] Sebastini to Talleyrand, 30th of December 1830. Talleyrand, *op. cit.*, Vol. III. p. 441.

January, Madame Adelaide wrote to him: "You will realize the irritation which exists here is very great about the Belgian question, and the strongly-pronounced desire of our nation is to see it (Belgium) become French again." [1]

It was not Talleyrand's method to ask directly for what he wanted. A few days after he received these letters he sounded Palmerston by asking him brusquely, "Cannot a means be found by which Luxembourg might be given to France?" "I admit," wrote Palmerston, describing the interview to Lord Granville, the English Ambassador at Paris, "that I was surprised at hearing a proposal so greatly in disaccord with the language which he and his Government used for some time. I replied that territorial acquisitions such as he indicated would change the relations between the two countries and make it impossible for us to remain in good accord with France." [2]

On receiving this rebuff, Talleyrand approached the Prussian Minister, and offered him Saxony in exchange for the Rhenish provinces. Finding no success here, he returned, again fruitlessly, with

[1] Charles Rogier, one of the Belgian envoys, wrote from Paris to M. de Celles: "We have spoken to the Minister (M. Sebastini) of the movements which manifest themselves in all parts of Belgium in favour of France. . . ." "Louis Philippe will refuse Belgium," replied the Minister, "and he equally will refuse you one of his sons to govern you. The King does not wish for war, and you must not wish for it either. England, all Europe, would commence that war if you were united to France" (C. Rogier to M. de Celles, 5th of January, 1831). Sebastini chose this moment to deceive the Belgian envoy in Paris.

[2] Lord Palmerston to Lord Granville, 7th of January, 1831. —Bulwer, *Life of Lord Palmerston*, Vol. II. pp. 28, 29.

fresh proposals to Palmerston; whereupon it was arranged between him and the French Cabinet to await events.[1]

Talleyrand's next proposal was that Belgium should be constituted a Federal State with a recognized neutrality, like Switzerland. "In making Antwerp and Ostend two Hanseatic towns," he wrote, on the 16th of January, to Sebastini, "it will be easy in this organization to protect the interests of France; and, looking forward, if we are led into any war, Belgium will be readier to reunite herself with us under this, than any other system." [2] England refused to accept Talleyrand's proposal to erect Belgium into a Federal State, but she accepted the suggestion of declaring Belgium neutral.[3]

The question of neutrality, and the other questions relating to the separation of Belgium from Holland, were definitely dealt with in the protocol of the 20th of January, 1831, which occupied two sessions. At them Talleyrand made his supreme effort. Lord Palmerston describing the proceedings in a letter to Lord Granville written on the

[1] Talleyrand to Sebastini, 3rd of January, 1831. Talleyrand, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV. p. 4.

[2] Talleyrand to Sebastini, 16th of January, 1831. Pallain, *op. cit.*, p. 173. Sebastini replied on the 17th of January, "Votre système est une pensée profonde dont le roi a été frappé."

[3] Belgium was declared a neutral State in order to make it impossible for France to annex the country, or obtain any power in it. The Belgians did not themselves desire to have their country made neutral, or put under the protection, which in some ways meant the tutelage, of the Powers. King Leopold I reminded Queen Victoria of this in a significant note written in a moment of annoyance at a trivial action of the English Government.—*The Letters of Queen Victoria*, III, pp. 218, 219.

21st of January, said Talleyrand commenced by demanding that the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg should be included in the declaration of neutrality. The Prussian Ambassador opposed this, and was supported by the other plenipotentiaries, who replied to Talleyrand that the Conference could not dispose of a Duchy which belonged to an independent sovereign. Thereupon as a set-off against German troops in the Grand Duchy, Talleyrand demanded the cession to France of the fortresses of Philippeville and Marienbourg. "We objected to this," said Palmerston,[1] "that we had not the power to give that which belonged to Belgium; that under a pretext of arranging the affairs of Belgium and Holland, we could not set about despoiling one of the parties, and that for the benefit of one of the mediators. Besides, if one commenced would not the other have the right of following his example? He fought like a lion, and in the end we had to finish by making him agree to the arrangement by the means which make juries unanimous, by hunger." The session lasted for eight hours and a half.

The protocol of the 20th of January, before declaring Belgium neutral, set out the boundaries of the country. Leaving the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg to the family of Nassau, who possessed it by a title different from that of the Kingdom of the Low Countries, and declaring that the territories of Holland should be all the territories which belonged to the ancient Republic of the Low Countries in 1790, it declared that Belgium should be formed by the remainder of the territories which received the denomination of the Kingdom of the

[1] Bulwer, *op. cit.*, Vol. II. pp. 29–31.

Low Countries in the treaty of 1815; but, that as Holland and Belgium possessed enclaves in their respective territories, such arrangements would be made by the five Powers as to assure these countries the reciprocal advantages of entire contiguity of possessions, and free communication between the towns and rivers on their territories. It freed the Scheldt by applying to the rivers and navigable streams of each country the articles relating to free navigation of the Congress of Vienna. Coming to the question of neutrality, it declared that Belgium should form a State perpetually neutral; her neutrality, as well as the integrity and invincibility of her territory being guaranteed by the five Powers. Belgium, on her part, was required "by a just reciprocity to observe the same neutrality towards all the other Powers." On the 27th of January, a further protocol was signed, which charged Belgium with 16/31 of the national debt of the now separated Kingdom of the Low Countries. The two protocols, of the 20th and 27th of January, were united in eighteen articles to form the definite basis of separation. The protocol ended with these words: "The five Powers . . . without deciding anything on the question of the sovereignty of Belgium, have right to declare that in their eyes the sovereign of that country must necessarily answer for the principle of the existence of the country itself; satisfy the security of the neighbouring States by his personal position; accept, for that reason, the arrangements set out in the present protocol (from the 20th to the 27th of January), and find himself in a position to assure their peaceful usage to the Belgians."

Holland accepted the terms set forth in this protocol. Belgium rejected the proposals, stung to the quick by the loss of Limbourg and Luxembourg; crying out, justly, against the proportion of the national debt of the Low Countries which she was burthened with; not pausing to value the advantages secured to her by the freeing of the Scheldt, and other concessions. The Powers continued to intervene by protocols, Belgium to reply by protestations and notes, while Holland maintained her position, holding Belgium's citadel, and blockading the freed river. To end the situation the Belgians did what they might well have done before, and set seriously to work to elect a King.

CHAPTER V

THE SEARCH FOR A KING

WHEN the Belgians announced their intention to elect a King, the French declared with mighty clamour, in which Legitimists, Orleanists, and Bonapartists joined, none but a Frenchman was possible as King of Belgium.

At this period Belgium was crowded with political exiles from France, men eager for war, fiercely articulate. These exiles were split into two camps, one of which was composed of the Liberals who had fled from their country to escape from the police of Charles X. These were but voluntary exiles since the July Revolution; they remained in Belgium to advance there the cause of the French Government that revolution had set up. The other camp was composed of Bonapartists, many of them old soldiers of Napoleon. Each party put forward different candidates for the throne. One supported the duc de Nemours, younger son of Louis Philippe, then little more than sixteen years old; the other the Duke of Leuchtenberg, son of Eugene de Beauharnais. The French parties made so much noise that for a time it appeared that there were no candidates possible but theirs. The majority of the Belgian Congress were Catholics, but they were not bigots. They made freedom of conscience and religious equality fundamental

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BARON DE SURLET DE CHOKIER, REGENT OF BELGIUM

parts of the constitution. They showed they were ready to practise these principles by electing a Liberal, Surlet de Chokier, first, President of their Congress, and then Regent of the Kingdom. Yet Louis Philippe, insisting that what he wished to be was the fact, declared that none but a Catholic Prince could be elected King of the Belgians. The choice amongst Catholics was confined to the families of Naples, Saxony, and Bavaria, he stated in a note addressed to his Foreign Minister early in November, for his son, the duc de Nemours, was not to be thought of; the election of the Duke of Leuchtenberg would not be tolerated by France, and although Count Félix de Mérode, member of the Provisionary Government, had sufficient influence in Belgium to be elected Grand Duke, perhaps even King of Belgium, his election would not be considered seriously by the Powers.[1] Amongst all the plans hatched by the French King, and his secret agent, the Prince-Duke de Talleyrand, that of elevating a Belgian noble to the throne, and allying him by marriage to the royal house of France, never entered their heads; and yet there were great families in Belgium which could trace descent from sovereign princes, through long lines of noble ancestry, and show scutcheons which bore no stain. After a time, Louis Philippe found a new combination. If he failed to force Belgium

[1] Louis Philippe to Maréchal Maison, 11th of November, 1830. A copy of this diffuse document was sent to Talleyrand on the 12th of November. Notwithstanding all that was said in it Talleyrand knew Louis Philippe was determined that the duc de Nemours should not only be thought of as a candidate, but that he should be elected to the Belgian throne.—Talleyrand, *Memoirs*, Vol. III. pp. 385–387.

to fling herself into the arms of France, and if by ill-chance his refusal to permit the candidature of the duc de Nemours was regarded and acted on by the Belgians, as if really meant, he was prepared, as a last resource, to consent to the election of Prince Otto of Bavaria on the condition that that prince would marry one of his daughters.

At this period, in November 1830, when the Belgians voted the exclusion of the House of Orange, another candidate for the Belgian throne, and the hand of an Orleans princess, appeared on the scene. This was Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, who, having lost the Consort's crown of England by the ill fate which caused the death of his wife, Princess Charlotte, had just, to the annoyance of the Great Powers, rejected the throne of Greece, after intriguing for it, and accepting it.

When Prince Leopold became a candidate for the Greek throne, Charles X still reigned in France, and the Prince is said to have sought to strengthen his candidature by a marriage with the Duchess of Berry, the mother of the Bourbon heir. When Charles X fell, and Louis Philippe came to the throne, Prince Leopold transferred his proposals to the new reigning family, and sought an alliance with an Orleans princess, but Louis Philippe would not listen to his proposals. The King of the French was still less inclined to listen to them when they were renewed in connection with the candidature of Prince Leopold to the Belgian throne. He declared to the Belgian envoy who approached him, that Prince Leopold was everything that was charming—but? "There is a but," he said, "which has nothing in it disobliging to

the prince's person or qualities, there are family repugnances, prejudices, perhaps, which oppose the proposed union." [1] These repugnances may not have been entirely political, but the French King's political repugnances were sufficient. Louis Philippe's secret aims on Belgium would have led him to object to Prince Leopold's candidature in any case. His opposition was so determined that it prevented the Belgians from urging the Prince's candidature, although Prince Leopold had the support of Prussia.

The crooked policy of the King of the French did infinite harm to the Belgians. Had they ceased to be his dupes and elected Prince Leopold without further delay, they would have gained the intermediarship with the Great Powers of one of the ablest and most prudent statesmen of his time. Afterwards, in 1832, Leopold I blamed the French and the Belgian leaders for trickeries and delays.[2] He blamed the French plotters justly, but he was unjust in blaming the Belgians for all they lost by their delay in failing to discover in him qualities he had not yet displayed. No one then knew that he was in any way an able or strong diplomatist;

[1] "Je connais depuis longtemps le prince Léopold de Saxe-Coburg : c'est un beau cavalier, un parfait gentilhomme, très instruit, très bien éléve. La reine le connait aussi, et apprécie les avantages de sa personne. Mais . . . il ya un mais qui n'a rien de désobligeant pour la personne et les qualités du prince ; il y a des répugnances de famille, des préjugés peut-être, qui s'opposent à l'union projetée."—A. Gendebien, *Revelations Historique sur la Revolution belge*, published in *La Liberte*, No. 17, March, 1867.

[2] "Le Prince de Talleyrand, la France et les Belges ont à se reprocher cela mutuellement, mais il est douloureux de penser ce que la Belgique aurait pu être sans les malheureuses intrigues de cette époque."—Leopold I to Le Hon, 19th of June, 1832.

his prudence alone was known and all the world scoffed at it. Diplomatists, disgusted by his action regarding Greece, had declared that his policy was made up of treachery and pusillanimity.[1] The Marquis Peu-à-Peu did not seem one likely to force the Powers to yield to Belgium. The Belgians but half reluctantly abandoned the thought of electing him, and proceeded with their negotiations and debates as though time had no meaning for them, and war no danger.

While the negotiations were being carried on with the Powers, the National Congress received petitions in favour of the election of candidates: General Lafayette, General Fabvrier, M. Sebastini, Chateaubriand, the Prince de Carignan, the Archduke Charles of Austria, Surlet de Chokier, Charles Rogier, Count Félix de Mérode, Prince Otto of Bavaria, the Duke of Reichstadt, the Prince of Salm-Salm, for whom 268 people petitioned; for any native prince, 10 petitioners; for the Pope, a derisory petition; for the Duke of Nemours, 600 petitioners; for Louis Philippe, with a Vice-Royalty, 508 petitioners; and for the Duke of Leuchtenberg, 3,257 petitioners.

England and Russia still supported the Prince of Orange. Lord Ponsonby, who was sent as English envoy to Brussels, was led by the supporters

[1] When Prince Leopold withdrew his acceptance of the Greek Crown, Count Nesselrode, the Russian Vice-Chancellor, wrote to the Prince de Lieven: "Il était réservé à son altesse Royale d'offrir au monde un spectacle d'une ingratitude et d'une duplicité dont les annales de l'histoire présentent heureusement peu d'exemples." Dispatch of the 9th of June, 1830.—Martens, *Recueil de traités et conventions conclues par la Russie avec les Puissances étrangères*, Vol. XI. p. 454.

of the Orange party to think they were strong in the country. There were several officers of high grade still in the Belgian service who were partisans of Orange, and on more than one occasion before the election of a King was concluded these attempted, at Ghent and elsewhere, to rouse the people in the Prince of Orange's favour. One of the leaders of these conspiracies wrote later to the Duke of Wellington, complaining bitterly that they were tricked into rising by Lord Ponsonby, and at the last moment abandoned or betrayed by him in order to further the cause of Prince Leopold;[1] but whatever may have passed between the Orange party and the English envoy, England was certainly not supporting Prince Leopold at this

[1] It was General Vandersmissen who wrote to the Duke of Wellington, under whom he had served at Waterloo. In this letter, written from Aix-la-Chapelle the [blank] 1832, General Vandersmissen said: "During my sojourn at Antwerp as Governor-General of the Province (in March 1831) the Hanoverian Consul, M. Ellerman, came to me and said he had communications of the greatest importance to make to me from Lord Ponsonby, and that he could give me the most positive assurances that that Lord was charged by his Government to favourise as far as he possibly could the restoration of the House of Orange; but that he desired that the Nassaus would be brought back by a popular movement. . . . The moment when the insurrection should break out arrived, and at that moment, when many distinguished and estimable persons were deeply compromised to save their country from anarchy, Lord Ponsonby informed the leaders of the movement that its execution should be postponed for some days.

"Your Grace will understand the danger of our position as a result of such unexpected conduct on the part of Lord Ponsonby. There were murmurs of treason; many jealous people commenced to distrust the generosity of his Lordship. The next day he was not afraid to throw off his mask and he declared to Major Pombt, at the Place Royale, that he had another combination to propose, and that it was unnecessary for the present to pay attention to the interests of the Prince of Orange."—Baron de Gerlache, *op. cit.*, Vol. II. pp. 357, 358.

stage, and the attempts at Orange risings served only to show how determined the people were to drive out all who were in favour of the House of Nassau.

After innumerable turnings and twistings, Louis Philippe determined to accept the offer of the Belgian Crown for the duc de Nemours. The Conference of London had already pronounced against the election of the Duke of Leuchtenberg. In London, Talleyrand continued to repeat the declaration of his master that Louis Philippe would not permit the election of his son under any circumstances. In Paris, Louis Philippe set himself to win over the Belgians to the election of his son. He sent his envoy, M. Brisson, who had returned to Paris for instructions, back to Brussels to work for the election of the duc de Nemours.[1] He refused to ratify the protocols of the 27th of January, which lay down the basis of separation, because it interfered with the question of debts and the settlement of the extent and the boundaries of territories without the free consent of the States concerned. His action had the desired effect in Brussels. The duc de Nemours was elected King by ninety-seven votes against seventy-five votes for the Duke of Leuchtenberg. The Orleanist faction in Belgium felt its triumph certain. Lithographs of the "duc de Nemours, King of the Belgians," appeared in the shop-windows. Full

[1] When the date of the election of a king approached, Brisson hastened to Paris for instructions. "Je m'en fie à votre zèle," lui dit le roi; "ce que vous ferez sera bien fait." M. Brisson voulut obtenir une réponse plus affirmative. "Le temps vous presse," reprit le roi; "partez donc."—The Duc de Broglie, *Le dernier bienfait de la Monarchie*, p. 308.

of pride in their success, a deputation formed of the most ardent of the French party with Surlet de Chokier, the President of the Congress, at their head, set off for Paris to make the formal offer of the Belgian Crown to Louis Philippe for his son. Arrived in Paris they were received with enthusiasm, and splendidly entertained; but they were kept waiting ten days before the King accorded them an audience for the purpose of their mission. During those ten days much happened. Talleyrand wrote from London that the accord with England would be broken at once if the offer of the Crown was accepted for the duc de Nemours. The English Cabinet met, and decided unanimously to declare war on France if the offer was accepted. Fit Minister of the double-faced King, Sebastini wrote immediately in reply to Talleyrand, disavowing his work. "The Government of the King is unchangeably decided," he said, "not to separate itself from the Great Powers, but to come to an understanding with them on the means of terminating the affairs of Belgium pacifically and promptly." "I never saw such a change of tone, humour, and language," wrote Lord Granville, the English Ambassador at Paris, to Lord Palmerston, on the 4th of February, "like that which took place to-day in the language of Sebastini. At one o'clock he was ardently bellicose, mounted on his highest horse. At half-past five he came into my room to inform me in a much smaller tone, and most amicably, of the refusal of Louis Philippe." [1] The news of England's attitude had reached

[1] Lord Granville to Lord Palmerston, 4th of February, 1831. —Bulwer, *Life of Palmerston*, p. 38.

the King and the Minister in the intervening hours.

It was not until the 17th of February that the Belgian envoys were received by Louis Philippe to announce the object of their mission. News of the defeat of the French King's scheme had already reached Brussels, but the envoys in Paris, flattered by Court and Government, seem to have believed until the last moment that their mission would prove successful. A description of the solemn audience which was accorded to them on the 17th of February, was written to the Belgian National Congress by Surlet.

"The King was on his throne, standing and uncovered, having on his right His Royal Highness the duc d'Orleans, and on his left His Royal Highness the duc de Nemours; the President read to him with much emotion the speech of which we have transmitted a copy to you. We believe we have expressed in it the intentions of the Congress and the sentiments of the Belgian nation with regard to the election of H.R.H. the duc de Nemours.

"After this speech and the reading of the decree of election, the President advanced to the throne, and handed His Majesty the speech, the decree, and a copy of the Act of the Constitution decreed by the Congress.

"The King, covering himself immediately afterwards, replied to us in the speech of which you are also sent a copy; the profound emotion of His Majesty checked his voice and forced him to pause many times in the course of his reply. This emotion was strongly shared by H.M. the Queen,

by H.R.H. the Princess Adelaide, and all the other members of the Royal Family. Tears poured from every eye. It is impossible for us to describe to you the general impression produced by this scene, where the feelings of the Father yielded, not without a struggle, to the duties of the Monarch." [1]

There was always an abundance of weeping, as a sign of good faith and of tender affection, at the Court of the Citizen King.

Surlet and his companions returned to Brussels more convinced than ever that the only hope of their country lay in France's help, notwithstanding the fact that their offer of the crown had been refused for his son by the French King. The situation of Belgium was at that moment perilous. There were Orange risings in several places; anarchy threatened. The National Congress had framed a magnificent code of laws, but the army had degenerated into a rabble. No soldier would obey orders. There were few Generals capable of commanding. In the press, officers accused each other of treachery. To gain breathing-time the Congress appointed its President, Surlet de Chokier, Regent of the Kingdom, at the same time electing Baron de Gerlache to succeed him as President of the Congress.

Surlet failed as Regent. He did not succeed in putting the army into a fit condition. His first act was to form a Cabinet composed entirely of Liberals. That Cabinet being unable to carry on the Government, speedily resigned, and a new

[1] Surlet de Chokier to M. de Gerlache, Vice-President of the Congress. Communicated to the Congress 21st of February.

Cabinet composed of Catholics and Liberals was appointed, with Monsieur Lebeau as Prime Minister.

Lebeau took office on the 28th of March. He had already found the king Belgium needed.[1] England was by this time won over to the side of Prince Leopold, France's reluctant consent to his election was obtained by the promise that he would marry Louis Philippe's daughter, and in the middle of April envoys were sent privately to London to arrange the preliminaries for the Prince's acceptance of the Crown.

[1] Lebeau is said to have attempted to bring about the election of one of the great houses of Belgium before he gave his support to Prince Leopold. Lebeau, in a conversation at the Hotel Imperial in Brussels in the spring of 1831, said he had offered the crown to the duc d'Arenberg, after him to the Prince de Ligne, and on their refusal to Lafayette; and showed a letter from Lafayette saying his republican principles and his age obliged him to refuse the offer, but recommending to the Belgian representatives his nephew by marriage, Count Félix de Mérode, who had every quality necessary to make a king such as they desired.—Baron de Gerlache, *op. cit.*, II. 360, note.

CHAPTER V

THE MARQUIS PEU-À-PEU

When the allied sovereigns came to London in 1815, the most brilliant officer in their suite was the young Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg. Cadet of the German Ducal family of Coburg, he had passed bravely, even gloriously, through many vicissitudes. Napoleon had seized his father's states and revenues. When he was a child his family was obliged to rely, for a time, on the kindness of their servants for necessaries. Throughout his boyhood the family remained sunk in debt, forced to live in the most meagre manner, almost weekly borrowing fresh sums from one of their men of business, who was always offered jewels, plate, or other valuable objects as security. Like every other princeling in Europe, Leopold of Saxe-Coburg found himself, not willingly, in Napoleon's Court. Napoleon declared he was the most handsome man he had ever seen, and wanted to attach him to his staff, but Prince Leopold had no desire to enter the Emperor's service, and by the aid of Josephine, it is said, managed to avoid it.

He served in the Russian army against Napoleon, was raised quickly to the rank of colonel, made aide-de-camp to the Emperor, and when he arrived in London, besides the orders which glittered on

every German prince's breast, he wore others he had won for bravery in the field.

He was young, beautiful, brave, accomplished, high-born, and poor. No sooner did the self-willed heiress to the throne of England see him than she resolved to marry him. The engagement of Princess Charlotte to the hereditary Prince of Orange had just been announced. Without hesitation she flung over that drunken boor, whom Prince Leopold was destined later to supplant on the throne of Belgium.

The Princess easily found a pretext for setting aside the marriage contract. She dared her father, laughing at his locking her up like a naughty child. She, heiress to the English throne! With all her uncurbed ways, she was lovable, and Prince Leopold speedily fell in love with her. His prudence did not desert him in love. He prevailed on the Princess to act with caution, and to aid him to win round her father's consent to their marriage. While waiting for the Prince Regent's consent, he corresponded with Princess Charlotte through one of her uncles, but could not be prevailed upon to return to England to see her until invited by the Prince Regent. The Prince Regent, whose greatest desire on earth was to be rid of all who bored him, was glad, as soon as passion at her rebellion died down, to consent to Leopold's marriage with the Princess Royal. The marriage took place on May the 2nd, 1816.

Claremont, a lovely country place fourteen miles from London, was purchased as a residence for the Princess Royal and her husband, who took up their residence there in the October following.

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LEOPOLD, SOVEREIGN PRINCE OF GREECE

The Princess never forgot she was heir to the English throne, and the Prince was content she should not forget it. Before her marriage her bearing was as unrestrained as her wild mother's had been. She was a tomboy, capricious, satirical, and fond of mischief, but kind-hearted.[1] She gained in calmness and self-control after her marriage. Her short married life was one of unbroken happiness. Its end was all the more sad because due exercise of medical skill could have averted it.

When he came to England, Prince Leopold brought with him a doctor, Christian Stockmar, who was throughout his life his guide in all political affairs, and the keeper of his conscience. Before long Stockmar was promoted from the position of doctor to that of private secretary, and ennobled. Unhappily, he was as cautious as the Prince, whom the Prince Regent nicknamed the "Marquis Peu-à-Peu." When Princess Charlotte was about to bear a child, Stockmar saw, as he admits in his *Memoirs*, that the treatment given to her by the English doctors was wrong. Instead of building up her strength, they put the Princess on low diet, and bled her constantly. Stockmar did not hint a word of his opinion. He saw it would be safer for him, a foreigner, to have nothing whatever to say to so important a case. When the accouchement arrived the Princess spent over fifty hours in labour. The English doctors of that period would not resort to artificial means to aid her. The result was that she was delivered of a still-born child, and died herself five hours

[1] Stockmar, *op. cit.*

later, in the early hours of the 6th of November, 1817.

"By a single stroke, all the hopes and all the happiness of the Prince were destroyed. He has never since been moved by the same affection he felt during that period," [1] wrote King Leopold many years afterwards, when Queen Victoria asked him for his memoirs to be inserted in *The Early Life of the Prince Consort.*

Hope of sharing the English throne went with his wife's death; but the position of Prince Leopold in England remained a brilliant one. He had, besides the magnificent estate of Claremont, an annuity of fifty thousand pounds a year. He carried a Field-Marshal's baton. He had arranged a marriage between his sister and the Duke of Kent, and the issue of that marriage was the Princess Victoria, who, in her turn, had become heir to the throne. He was the little Princess's chief adviser; he might hope, as indeed turned out to be the case, to remain her chief adviser throughout her life; it was not beyond the bounds of possibility that he might be appointed Regent of England if she succeeded to the throne during her minority.

Nevertheless the Prince's life was a gloomy one. His heart dried up when his wife died. His ambition had not died, but for long he brooded more than he acted. No thought of a second marriage entered his head before marriage seemed necessary to advance his interest as candidate for the Crown of Greece, or for that of Belgium. He lived out-

[1] *Notes Autobiographiques de Léopold I.* In these notes he wrote of himself in the third person.

wardly an austere life, constantly checking himself by his prudence, constantly being checked and lectured by his indispensable Stockmar; but he had various *liaisons*, which alarmed the good Stockmar, who thought that to English eyes the well-provided-for widower should seem perpetually inconsolable. To save his master from danger, and at the same time advance his own hold on him, Stockmar hit on the most extraordinary plan. He had a niece, a beautiful actress, named Caroline Bauer, who was said to resemble Princess Charlotte. Worthy Stockmar deliberately put this young girl in the Prince's way, and arranged "a kind of marriage ceremony" between them. At the time the negotiations were going on about the Greek throne, this girl of twenty-two and her mother were brought to England—annuities having first been settled on both—and hidden during the London season in a house in the Regent's Park; or, when Leopold was at Claremont, in a gloomy villa near by. In the Regent's Park house the ceremony in lieu of marriage was performed, Stockmar and his brother reading over a "marriage contract," and the Prince, Caroline Bauer, and the witnesses signing it. Daily, until the Belgian affair loomed in view, the Prince visited Caroline Bauer, and spent hours in what she describes as the fashionable occupation of drizzling; picking the gold and silver threads out of old epaulettes and suchlike, while she read aloud dry novels, or played and sang.

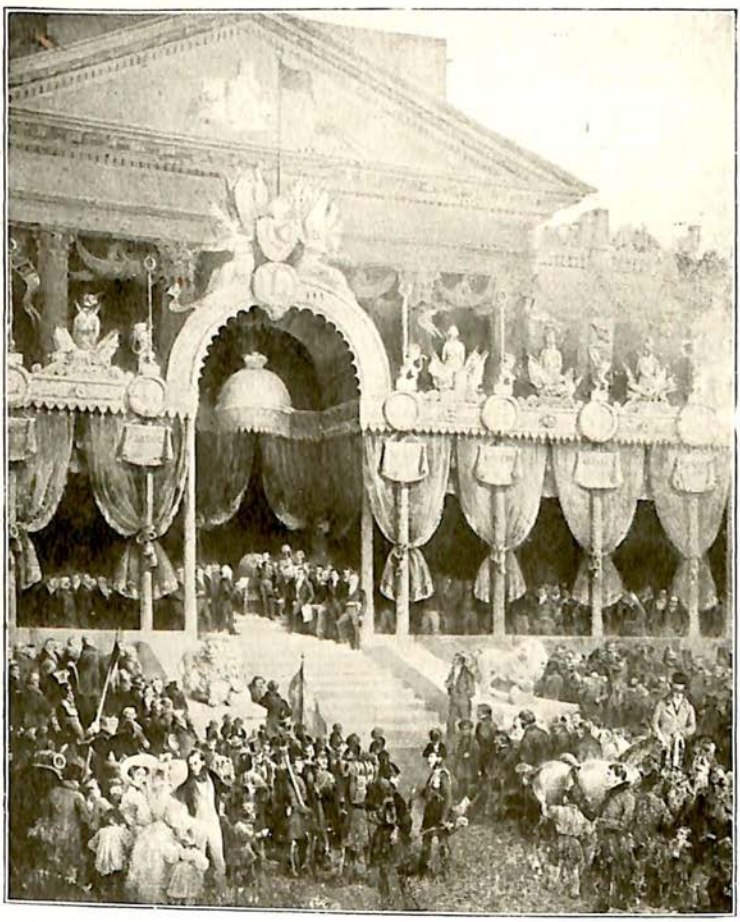
At this time, according to the actress's description, Prince Leopold was "a man of weary, weary expression, stooping, relaxed gait, slow, deliberate, and subdued speech, his head covered by an

ingeniously-made wig, glossy with pomatum, reminding one more of a pedantic recluse professor, an old bachelor upwards of fifty, than of a gay Prince of eight-and-thirty." [1] The connection between him and Caroline Bauer lasted only a year.

It is possible that this incident in the Prince's life had something to do with the repugnance of him of which Louis Philippe spoke. In justice to the Prince it must be admitted he considered he was playing a perfectly honourable part, and looked on the contract drawn up by Stockmar and signed before witnesses, as quite as binding and moral as any morganatic marriage performed by a clergyman. His letters speak of religious belief, and his life did not belie his words, but he does not seem to have attached much importance to church-going. It was Stockmar who advised him to establish a church to worship in when he went to Belgium, there being none of his religion in that Catholic country. "The people will not mind what church you go to," said Stockmar, "but they will expect you to go to church."

This was the Prince the Belgians selected to reign over them; a man whose past life had been full of promise, expectancy, and gloom; and whose future life was to be one of realization and unceasing effort.

[1] *Memoirs of Caroline Bauer*, Vol. II. pp. 35, 36. She adds: "No clergyman placed his hand on my head to invoke blessing, no bridal wreath adorned my locks. Christian Stockmar had drawn up the marriage contract . . . in it I received the title of Countess Mountgommery, and a modest annual allowance was settled on me."



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INAUGURATION OF KING LEOPOLD I

CHAPTER VII

THE NESTOR OF EUROPE

THE Belgians received their new King enthusiastically. He was enthroned in Brussels in the open air, with somewhat of theatrical display and scene-shifters' mystery. The steps of the Church of St. Jacques, on the top of Coudenberg, "the cold hill," were transformed into a great platform, on which stood the members of the Congress, and the other notabilities of the revolution, grouped around the Regent, Surlet de Chokier, who sat in a gilded chair.

Leopold had landed in France, and travelled with as much speed as possible to the Belgian capital. To the people, his journey appeared a triumphal march. The roads were lined with country-folk, cheering lustily. In villages, aged priests surrounded by their flocks poured blessings on the Prince who came to rule over them. In Brussels, it seemed as if all Brabant had pressed into the capital. In the narrow streets, demolished since by Leopold II, the crowds were so great that none could raise a hand. Leopold made his entry on horseback, wearing a General's uniform. At Coudenberg, he dismounted, and took his place on a chair placed near that of the Regent. Thereupon Surlet de Chokier made a long speech, telling of what he had done as Regent, and resigned his

Regency. The speech finished, the gilt chairs vanished, a throne appeared, Leopold pronounced the few words which form the simple, but sufficient oath of the Belgian Kings, and mounted the throne.

The disappearance of the Regent's gilt chair was more significative than was thought by those who planned the ceremony of the enthronement. With it, Surlet de Chokier disappeared from Belgian history, and from the memory of his fellow-countrymen. He was a well-intentioned man. His joviality had gained him the friendship of the members of the Congress. They thought because he was an able barrister, and a true patriot, he would be a competent President of their Councils. As President of the Congress his success amongst the Belgians was undoubted. The moment he was elected Regent his failings became apparent. Instead of organizing the army, he listened to debates, and discussed codes of law. The army, which, in a country faced by the armies of the King it had dethroned, should have been the first care of the head of the new Government, was allowed to become completely disorganized. Surlet cannot be entirely blamed for this. An army composed of newly-enrolled volunteers, who believe their work is already done, is difficult to be kept together by one who seeks for popularity amongst the people. The Belgians, civil and military, thought when their new King ascended the throne, that their battles were at an end. Every Belgian soldier looked for rewards, few Belgian soldiers were ready to submit to discipline. In fact, though the Belgians were brave, and determined

to maintain their liberty, their army existed no longer as an effective body when King Leopold I mounted the throne. King Leopold saw this before the Belgians did. While the Ex-Regent boasted, the King maintained a grim silence. With words of cold ceremony he thanked Surlet, and let him pass from his presence. He never summoned him into it again, and Surlet, who had boasted one day that the King of the French treated him, Regent of Belgium, as an equal, found himself passed over when the distribution took place of the order created by King Leopold.

King Leopold was justified in his fears, and in his estimate of the army. He was no sooner seated on the throne, than the Dutch recommenced hostilities. Their doing so was unlucky for Belgium, but lucky for the King's reputation; in the skirmishes which took place, he displayed his valour and his intelligence.

"Whatever Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg may have been during the years of his widowhood in England, Leopold I of Belgium, from the first moment he landed on Belgian ground, proved himself an enlightened and energetic sovereign. In the contest with the Dutch, he bravely exposed himself to danger. Nothing but a chance incident prevented him from being taken prisoner by them. It was not his fault that he had to call the assistance of France to his aid. The French army came and went. Nothing was exacted by France for her aid. The marriage between King Leopold and a daughter of Louis Philippe was already arranged. But, while France exacted nothing, Holland, although again conquered, managed to

gain much. The treaty which had taken such a long time in the making was broken; years passed before a new treaty was made to which Holland consented. Under the new treaty, on a diplomatic pretext, Luxembourg was taken from Belgium and given to the Dutch King. Part of Limbourg was also taken; and a still greater loss was imposed on the country: that of the lands on either side of the Scheldt below Antwerp, and of the freedom of the port of Antwerp. The territories given to Holland, or to the King of Holland, have not been restored to Belgium, and the danger to the country of having the lands which border the river leading to her greatest commercial city and port in the possession of another power, has become manifest in the present time. The diplomatists who insisted on Belgium's consenting to the demands of Holland acted unwisely. Although Palmerston declared one of the reasons for making Belgium a neutral State was to turn the turbulent, war-loving Belgians into peaceful traders, the diplomatists, with Palmerston at their head, permitted Holland to put Belgium in fetters, by allowing Holland the control of her one great port. The tax imposed by the Dutch on all the shipping entering the Scheldt was a grievous burden, but Belgium was not crushed by it. Belgium was the first continental country in which railways were built. From their construction, which commenced in 1834, new Belgium may be said to have sprung. Much of the country's development was due to King Leopold. From the time of their ancestor, Othon the Rich, who in the twelfth century gained wealth for himself and his little Margravate of

Misnia, the Coburgs were adroit in the gaining of money, and judicious in its expenditure for the State. Their poverty during the youth of Leopold I was an accident of the Napoleonic era.[1]

A true Coburg, King Leopold was shrewd in money matters, but he was more close-fisted than most of his race. What he gave to Belgium was, mainly, his advice. His money he kept for himself. A story frequently repeated in the Belgian press is that of the saying of the President of the Grand Harmonie, the musical club of the Brussels shopkeepers, to which he presented a flag. "I am afraid you will find it heavy," said the King to the President. "Your Majesty's gifts are always light," replied the good citizen, thinking he had hit upon a courtly reply. Into his reply the people read another meaning, and the jest upon it is laughed at even to-day. King Leopold, who had not a penny when he came to England to marry Princess Charlotte, whose civil list in Belgium was not over large, died very rich. Some of his money came from his English revenues. When he quitted England to become the King of the Belgians, he retained Claremont, but, forced by the opinions of the Radicals, he resigned, in a nobly-worded letter, the income England had given him. That he could have insisted on retaining it, there is no doubt,

[1] Scheler, *Histoire de la Maison de Saxe-Coburg Gotha*, p. 34. Othon the Rich was a fit ancestor for Leopold II. The silver mines he exploited were in the forest of Miriquidi, on land granted by Othon to the Abbey of Celle, which he founded. The clearing of the forest disclosed the silver mines, whereupon Othon retook his gift, compensating the abbey by a fresh grant of territories in another part of his domains. The abbey was suppressed in the sixteenth century, and its library incorporated with that of Leipsic.

but there is also no doubt that his retaining it would have been a cause of scandal in Parliament, and greatly lowered his prestige in Belgium. The surrender of a secure revenue when mounting an insecure throne was a bitter necessity, but King Leopold contrived that the surrender should be infinitely less than it was supposed to be. While nominally resigning the whole income, he arranged to retain as much of it as was necessary to keep up Claremont in fitting state, to pay the annual donations to charities, and various institutions which he had been in the custom of paying, and to pay pensions to such people as had been of use to him in England. How much he retained for these different purposes is not known, but it was a goodly sum. On his list of pensions all sorts of incongruous people were placed, from Stockmar and Stockmar's niece downwards. Pensioners have long lives. The English Vice-Consul in Brussels continued to pay some of King Leopold's pensioners out of his English fund, for very many years after his death, even down to the last decade.

King Leopold I read the thoughts of politicians, but he never fully understood the Belgian people, or assimilated their spirit. He remained cold amidst their heat, romantic amongst what they would call their common sense, large-minded amidst their narrow minds. The Belgians he reigned over, with notable exceptions, were dull. They were content that their country should be little Belgium. When they became manufacturers they did not become exporters. Good workmen in field or workshop, they did not make good shopkeepers. They did not know how to cry their

wares. King Leopold put new energy into them, and revived their old energies. The thought of Africa did not occur to him, but he tried to establish a Belgian colony in America. Until Holland agreèd to the treaty of twenty-eight articles, which the Powers imposed on Belgium after the war with Holland, on King Leopold's succession, Luxembourg and Limbourg, and the borders of the Scheldt at the river-mouth, had remained in the hands of Belgium. The Belgians, and their King, hoped terms would be come to by which these territories might be retained, but when Holland at last acceded to the treaty, and recovered these territories, war for a third time became imminent. King Leopold did all in his power to retain the disputed territories for his country. He offered every possible concession, but in vain. France at this juncture abandoned Belgium, declaring she would remain neutral, while the Germanic Confederation announced it would stand by the Dutch King. The Belgians were deeply hurt, but they were just enough not to blame their ruler for the loss he had sought to avoid. It was at this moment that party government began in Belgium. Up to the moment of the declaration of peace with Holland, party feuds had been laid aside, and the Belgian Cabinets were coalition ones. Thenceforward party rule replaced coalition. The Liberals were the first to organize themselves, and they reaped the earliest profit of the split, but the Catholics were not slow to follow them, and in the end the finer organization, the greater popularity of the Catholics prevailed. The Liberal party stood in the days of Leopold I for high finance. The

Catholics, led in a part by the nobility, but in a greater part by the clergy, nearly all of whose members were drawn from the peasant class, stood for the people. King Leopold, Lutheran and Free Mason [1] though he was, relied more on the Catholics than on the Liberals. In his belief, the Liberal party was a rope of sand. In that party there were able and patriotic men. They did good service to their country, but, on the whole, the legislation of the Liberals was class legislation, which in the reign of King Leopold II and in the present reign, Catholics, Socialists, and advanced Liberals themselves united to pull down. On the other hand, the legislation of the Catholics under Leopold I laid the foundations of the modern social laws, which are being perfected more and more every day in Belgium.

Proof of the popularity of Leopold I was given in 1848, at the moment of the February Revolution, when the whole country rallied round the throne, and the wave of revolution was broken at the Belgian frontier.

A popular print shows the King surrounded by his family, offering to surrender the Crown for himself and his descendants in the country's interest. King Leopold made no such offer, but the people's belief that he did illustrates their estimation of his patriotism.

[1] King Leopold became a Free Mason long before he mounted the Belgian throne. He does not seem to have had any connection with the Free Masons from the time he became King. He practised his religion mainly because Stockmar advised him to. On Stockmar's advice part of the buildings of the old palace of Prince Charles of Lorrain, adjoining what is now the Modern Picture Gallery, were converted into a Lutheran Church, and Leopold I attended the services held there.

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KING LEOPOLD I.

The greatest triumph of Leopold I was the opening of the Scheldt. The King, in achieving it, owed much to the labour of Baron Lambermont, chief of the permanent staff of the Belgian Foreign Office; but the King worked valiantly for it himself. Though his memory is revered in Belgium, what he did in this matter is scarcely remembered. Heedless of his ill-health, King Leopold travelled from court to court, using his personal influence with the sovereigns to obtain their consent to the scheme for paying off Holland and freeing shipping in the Scheldt. It is to the King the chief credit is due for the measures which made Antwerp one of the greatest ports of Europe, and Belgium the fourth commercial power in the world.

A strain of melancholy ran through King Leopold's life. He lived placidly with his second wife, Queen Louise, who had inherited all the bourgeois virtues of her father, Louis Philippe, and was loved by the Belgians. Although outwardly austere, he was not, even in the end of his days, a moral man. One of the first acts of Leopold II on coming to the throne, was to expel one who had been his father's mistress from the country.

Leopold I was called the Nestor of Europe. He may have been the wisest of the sovereigns of his time, but he owed more to chance, to the persistent wooing of fortune, and to prudence, than to his wisdom. By nature an autocrat, his love of a crown forced him to accept democrats as his ministers.

Despiser of upstarts, his same love of a crown led him to ally himself with an Orleans. Kingship was his idol; the duties of a King he discharged

conscientiously for the good of the people he reigned over. If once he sulked for a time, beyond the borders of his kingdom, when in disaccord with his Ministers, on every other occasion he was by their side, advising, teaching, guiding; at times, compelling. It was he who commenced to mould the Belgians into the people they are to-day. It was his son, Leopold II, who finished the task. Father and son, working on the same lines, made modern Belgium great.

CHAPTER VIII

LEOPOLD THE EMPIRE BUILDER

On the 17th of December, 1865, King Leopold II made his Joyous Entry into Brussels. Born in 1835, he became legally of age in 1853, when he took his seat in the Senate as heir to the throne. Long before he became King his views were known to the world. His character was revealed in his speeches in the Senate. He was determined to continue his father's work, and make the country great and prosperous. Leopold I, preserving the appearance of a constitutional ruler, had on great occasions forced all to bend before him. Leopold II was born to be an autocrat, and became one.

Belgian rulers before him had made their Joyous Entries into their capitals with much splendour and martial display, but often they entered, in reality, more as captives to the burghers than as their lords. The citizens presented their keys on bended knees; but at the same time they presented their ancient charters to be ratified, set out grievances to be redressed, put forth demands for new privileges to be granted before the mighty sovereign was permitted to enter the city. When King Leopold II entered his city of Brussels, it was he, not the citizens, who demanded measures for the city's good. The first act of his reign was typical of all that was to follow. His entry was as

splendid as that of any of his predecessors. The King of Portugal, the Crown Prince of Prussia, Prince Arthur of England, the Duke of Cambridge, the Archduke Joseph of Austria, Prince George of Saxony, the Duke of Saxe-Coburg Gotha, a crowd of other foreign princes, and the envoys extraordinary of all the Powers were in his train. The most practical of men, King Leopold thought little of making a parade before the foreign visitors of the beauties and resources of his capital, and as little of winning the people's love by honeyed speech. Instead, replying to the harangue of the Bourgmestre, at the entrance of the city, he called the attention of the city council to the fact that Brussels suffered from the "emanations of an unwholesome river," to which state of things an end must be put. In the Chamber, having taken the oath to maintain the Constitution, he declared: "I promise Belgium a King Belgian in heart and soul, whose whole life will belong to her. The first king of the Belgians to whom Belgium has given the day, I am associated with all the patriotic feelings of my country from my infancy. Like her, I have followed with joy the national development which makes all the sources of force and prosperity teem in her womb. Like her, I love those great institutions which guarantee order at the same time as liberty, and are the most solid basis of the throne. In my thoughts the future of Belgium is always blended with my own, and I have always considered it with that confidence which is inspired by the right of a free nation, honest and courageous, which desires its independence, which has known how to conquer for it, has shown itself worthy of, and will

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KING LEOPOLD II.

(*His Majesty's favourite portrait of himself*)

know how to protect it. . . . I have never made a distinction between Belgians, I include all devoted to their country in a common affection. My constitutional mission places me outside the war of opinions, leaving it to the country itself to decide between them. I desire ardently that their differences may always be tempered by that spirit of national fraternity which unites the children of the Belgian family at this moment around the same flag. During the first thirty-five years Belgium has seen herself accomplish things which have been rarely realized by a single generation in a country of the extent of ours. But the edifice, the foundations of which were laid by the Congress, can raise itself higher, and will raise itself higher again."

All that he promised Belgium for the advancement of the country in this grandiose speech, King Leopold II performed. He came to the throne king of a little people—a people with great memories, it is true, but with a narrow outlook. When he died Belgium had been made by him a great country. Her borders cannot be enlarged in Europe, but in the colony he gave the kingdom Belgium has an immense area teeming with riches. In that colony is a future under their own country's flag for the ambitious youths of Belgium—and there they are now seeking it.

The greatest curse that ever fell on a nation is that of its people's emigration; it is always the most virile who leave, the weakest who remain at home. No such curse has fallen or is likely to fall on Belgium. The Belgians have the good fortune to know when they have enough. A Belgian goes to a distant or foreign land to make his fortune, not

to settle in it; and, his fortune made, he returns home to enjoy well-earned leisure. In founding the Congo State King Leopold did the Belgians an unmixed good. His benefits to Belgium were many. There is hardly a commune in the country which was not improved and embellished by him. Brussels was little more than a provincial town when he came to the throne. He made it a city of palaces. He was a palace builder and empire maker to the last. When he died his body was borne from the Palace of Brussels through scaffoldings which covered the new work he was carrying out at that palace, and through scaffoldings at the Church of Laeken, which he was completing, to its last resting-place in the royal vault under the church. Views other than his prevailed in Belgium for a moment after his death. Many of King Leopold's plans died with him. Such is the inevitable fate of a man of great ideas, but his work for Belgian expansion could not die.

The great things King Leopold did in Belgium fade into insignificance before what he did in the Congo. That work was generously conceived. Its results were magnificent. If from being purely a humanitarian enterprise it became something other the King should not be blamed. His actions with regard to the Congo for many years were admitted on all sides to be entirely noble. To develop the country he poured his private means into it. For years he met the State's deficit by a grant of forty thousand pounds annually to its budget. A moment came when he was financially ruined. He was actually without sufficient cash to meet his ordinary expenses. At that moment the Belgian Chambers

came to his rescue, and gave him not only a large loan but a free hand. Almost at the same moment the Congo State became profitable. The use of rubber in Europe and America increased immensely. King Leopold, who looked on all men, white or black, as pawns, forced the natives of the Congo to gather the rubber for him, showing them but little mercy when they did not labour as he required; but it must be remembered if he took much from them, he gave them more. Civilization never marched forward with quicker strides than it has done in the Congo. Belgian soldiers and Belgian priests worked, and are working, side by side to advance it. The pay given to Congo officials has never been great, but volunteers were never wanting from the Belgian army, always loyal to its King, to fill the Congo service. The Belgian priests and nuns now show themselves as arduous for Congo labour as for their tranquil work at home; but in the beginning it was not so. King Leopold went on more than one occasion to the chief house of the greatest Belgian missionary order to beg its members to undertake the Congo work. They already had many missionaries in China, and they thought they should not have their energies divided by working in Africa. The King, wisely, thought otherwise. He insisted, and in the end refused to leave the missionary fathers' house, at Scheut, before they consented to undertake the Congo work.

Much of the abuse of King Leopold for his Congo rule came from Protestant missionaries. When they commenced to attack him systematically, he

ceased to encourage Protestant missionaries. They were impeded in many ways by his Congo officials. For this they were, in great part, to blame themselves. They were, mostly, English or Americans drawn from a class which had little education, great credulity, and many private ambitions. Very many of them while evangelizing the natives wanted to gain money by their aid. The King's labour laws, his rubber laws, prevented this. It was because they might not trade profitably, that numbers of the Protestant missionaries became so bitter against King Leopold, resolutely shut their eyes to the good he did in the Congo, and opened wide their ears to every tale of evil a savage told, however ludicrous or exaggerated.[1]

King Leopold was in all things magnificent. He was magnificent in his donations. He gave lavishly for public and for private ends; but he gave little, directly, to himself. He assured the writer of this book he never made a penny out of the Congo for himself. The cases brought into court by one of his daughters since his death has proved to all the world that he made many millions out of the Congo, but all he got he gave, or sought to give, to others. It was by a chance he tried hard to avoid that he died worth money. "The King is a strange man," said Monsieur Beernaert, who was Prime

[1] The explanation here given of the cause of the bitterness of Protestant missionaries against King Leopold is based on a statement of the case made to the author more than once, each time in almost exactly the same words, by the English diplomatist who was, officially, most closely connected with the representation of the views of England, regarding the Congo, to King Leopold.

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BRUSSELS — THE KING'S PALACE

Minister of Belgium at the moment the Chambers consented to his becoming Sovereign of the Congo; "he wishes to make much money and to die without a penny." That was said four years before the closing days of King Leopold's life, in which all the world saw him feverishly trying to rid himself of everything he possessed, even down to the liveries on his servants' backs. There was much that was regrettable in his action during the last months of his life, as, indeed, there was much that was regrettable in all his private life; but King Leopold's great aim in money-making was noble. His idea was to endow Belgium with a fleet of merchant ships, which could, if necessary be turned into a navy, and to expand the commerce and industry of the Belgians in every land. Two great powers joined in preventing him from creating his fleet. None prevented him from expanding Belgian commerce, and to-day in every distant country, in Asia as well as Africa, Belgians are in the first ranks of traders and administrators.

During his lifetime King Leopold II got little praise for the good work he did. That he did good work is forgotten by many, and unknown to more. Events of his private life occupy too large a space in the public mind. He was not a faithful husband, or a kind father; but while many of his actions as husband and father have to be deplored, it must be admitted that his provocations were great, and those he sinned against were, none of them, free themselves from sin. He was married while still a youth to a princess who never had an interest or a thought in common with him. He was a man

of immense intellect. His wife interested herself in little more than horses and dogs. He was the proudest of men. Allowing himself more than most men take of latitude, he felt disgraced by the Queen's condescension to circus keepers and actors. Each of his daughters in turn wounded his pride. He blamed the nagging Princess Stephanie for the tragedy which ended in the death of her first husband, Archduke Rudolf, and for her second marriage, a mésalliance with one younger than herself. No father, and he last of all, could pardon the sad and reckless Princess Louise for her actions. Princess Clementine, his youngest daughter, chafed beneath restriction, and rebelled against the constant instructions and directions of the Queen. The King took the Princess's side, and, since it was impossible for her and her mother to live together in harmony, he allowed her a separate establishment, but later the Princess's temper blazed up against the King, and he treated her with severity for a considerable time. He needed her, however, to fill in public the place vacated by the Queen, and kept outwardly on good terms with her. His refusal to consent to her marriage with Prince Victor Napoleon was due to selfishness more than to statecraft.

Notwithstanding all this, King Leopold was not a heartless man. His sorrow at the death of his only son, the Duke of Brabant, was poignant. His affection and pity for his sister, the unfortunate Empress Charlotte, was real. When the fallen, homeless Empress was brought, mad, to Belgium, he did all that could be done for her. The sight of

him, as often happens with regard to the people mad folk love, drove the Empress into paroxysms of rage, so he had constructed a gallery from which he could watch her without her notice.

A man of affairs, he cared nothing about literature, or any art except architecture. He read the Belgian papers regularly, and *The Times*, which was flung daily out of a passing train into the grounds of Laeken, picked up by a waiting servant, damped (our fathers used to get their papers damp), and ironed before it was brought to him.

While his nights were given to pleasure, every moment of King Leopold's days was given to business. His study in Laeken was a small room furnished in the most hideous Victorian style. There he worked with the assistance of a private secretary and an aide-de-camp. His secretary's office was in Brussels. Orderlies on bicycles rode to it, fast on each other's heels, all day long from Laeken with the King's orders, written by himself on tiny scraps of paper. His business interests were world wide. He formed dozens of companies not only in the Congo but also in China, Russia, Germany, and elsewhere. These companies were composed, nominally, of officials of his household, his secretary, his doctor, his lawyers, his bankers—all, in connection with these companies, were, as to him, men of straw.

The Belgians are not invariably moral, but they are not hypocrites. They preferred their ruler to make no false parade of virtues he did not possess. Scandal busied itself with King Leopold's name, but neither King nor people heeded it, and the

reproving voice of the Church was silenced as his end drew near by a marriage between the King and she who was his companion at the last. This marriage was not morganatic, for morganatic marriages are unknown in Belgium, but it was extra-legal as it received the benediction of the Church without the civic rite necessary to legalize marriages in Belgium. When the King died she who was his wife in the eyes of the Church, magnificently dowered, passed out of Belgium and Belgian history.

King Leopold used men as tools. When they were no further use to him he flung them aside. He never forgave a man who contradicted or crossed him. Several of the men who did the best work for him in the first settlement of the Congo, and in Belgian politics, fell into disgrace, and were ignored. To all he was haughty. With excessive courtesy he would take the hat of a man to whom he granted an audience, and himself lay it aside, but to the same man, though he were an ambassador, he would give but two fingers of his hand to shake. He cared nothing about public opinion, as it regarded himself personally, and never took the slightest notice of the attacks made on him in the press. Of public opinion on politics he did take account, and, in 1884, when public opinion went clearly against a reactionary ministry he insisted on the retirement from the Cabinet of the two most disliked members. In the first years of his reign he leant towards the Liberals; in the last he depended on the Catholics. He was not irreligious. His death was edifying. He was charitable, and his charities were given in private, not a word

about them being allowed to appear in the press. He was beloved by his servants, in whose welfare, and in the welfare of whose families he took a personal interest.

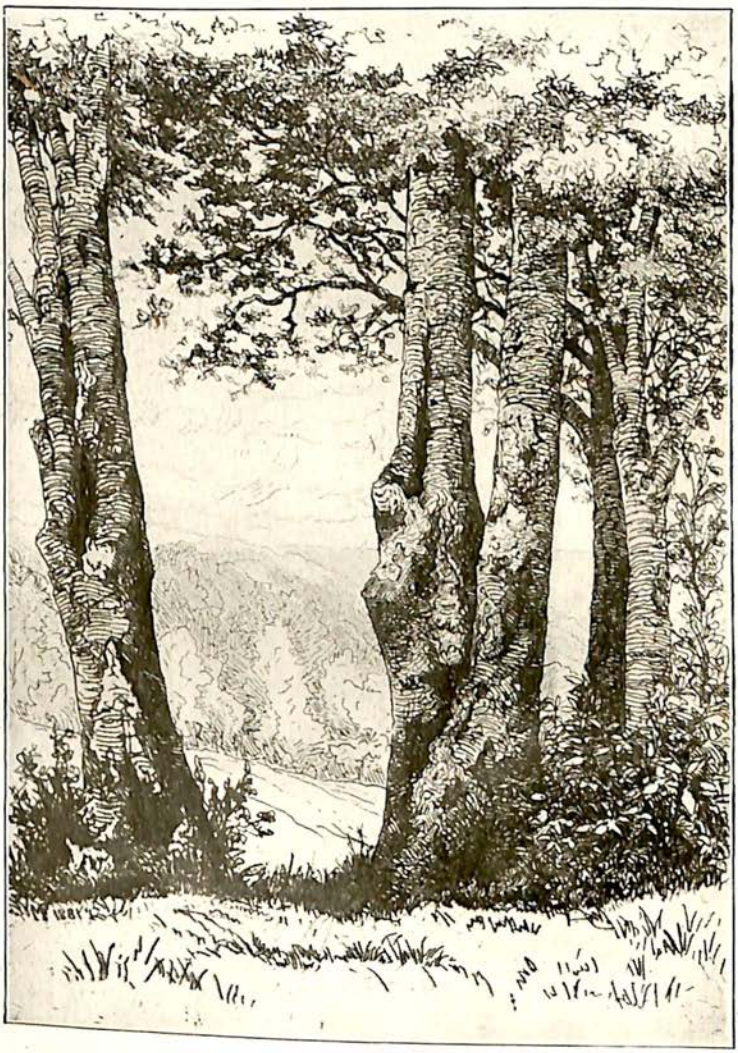
Such was the man who made Belgium what she is to-day.

CHAPTER IX

ALBERT, THE PEOPLE'S KING

ALBERT, the present King of the Belgians, came to the throne, as far as the Belgian people knew, little better than an untried stripling. At the time of his succession he was thirty-five years of age, and the father of three children, yet something of a boyish look about his long, slim figure, joined to his trick of blushing frequently, made this princely general of the Belgian army seem a boy in his teens. As heir to the throne he had taken his seat in the Senate on the death of his father, and in the Senate he had delivered speeches; but these speeches were far different from those his uncle and predecessor delivered when he sat in the Senate as heir to the throne. King Leopold II, when Duke of Brabant, had already the wide views and the determination of the Empire Maker. Prince Albert's speeches, read with bashful hesitancy, akin to mumbling, dealt with somewhat waterish economic projects. The truth was that the future King, though not devoid of courage and resolution, stood in the greatest awe of his imperious uncle.

King Leopold's affection for his successor might, perhaps, be better described as detestation. Outwardly most courteous to the Prince, he was in private abnormally strict with him. It is no wonder Prince Albert looked and acted as a boy,



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VIEW AT AMEROIS, THE ARDENNES CHÂTEAU OF THE COUNT AND COUNTESS OF FLANDERS, KING ALBERT'S PARENTS

(*Etching by H.R.H. the Countess of Flanders*)

for he was treated as one. He dared not go anywhere, or attend any function, without King Leopold's permission, and King Leopold's permission was more often refused than granted.

Until he reached his seventeenth year, in 1891, Prince Albert had no expectation of succeeding to the throne. In that year a tragedy robbed the House of Flanders of its eldest son. Up to then Prince Albert had led the ordinary life of continental princelings. He was educated in part at the Military school, in part by private tutors, but without any training in the difficult art of kingship. He is, or seems to be, the most conscientious of men. The moment he found himself heir to the throne he set to work to improve what he considered his imperfect education. Daily he sat at the feet of Baron Lambermont, Belgium's great diplomatist, and learned the secrets of diplomacy from him. A Liberal professor, head of the Sociological Institute established by the millionaire Solvay, gave him lessons in political economy. When he found people hinted he was allowing himself to be over-influenced by the Liberals, he added to his tutors two clergymen, one a Dominican, the other a Jesuit author who wrote the severest criticism of King Leopold's Congo work. The Catholic instructors did not make as much parade as the Liberals did of their work with the Prince, and it was generally believed that he was wholly Liberal. This was far from being the fact.

King Leopold died in an outbuilding of his château of Laeken, which he had stripped as bare as he could in his desire to leave nothing to his offending daughters, who, according to Belgian

law, were his heirs. He left directions that his funeral should be of the simplest. King Albert disregarded these directions. The funeral of Leopold II was magnificent. The courts of Europe, to which during the last years of his life he had been a stranger, sent their princes to it. The same princes attended the State Entry of King Albert to Brussels, on the 23rd of December, 1909. The entry was also magnificent, and no disagreeable incident marked the day. Brussels was crowded with sightseers, amongst whom no voices were raised except to cheer. The new King bore himself well in the antiquated uniform of a Belgian General, such as his grandfather, the first King of the Belgians, and King Leopold II wore, on their entries, and at the openings of the Belgian Parliament. He still seemed timid, and he still blushed, but manliness shone out under his blushes. He did not pronounce as grandiose a harangue to the Chambers as Leopold II had done on his accession, but what he said produced the best effect. Special note was taken of, and special pleasure was found in, his reference to art and literature, which he declared should be protected. In the previous reign financiers, rather than artists or men of letters, had the protection of the throne, and surrounded the King. Yet Belgium is still a land of artists, the fatherland of great writers.

King Albert, as King Leopold II before him always did, meant what he said. He has already given solid proofs of his interest in art, and his intention to advance the interest of artists, and he has done the same with regard to literature.

That he should speak of, and practise philan-

thropy, every one knew. Both he and his wife, Queen Elizabeth, born Duchess in Bavaria, have made a fad of philanthropy. The Queen of the Belgians is the daughter of the famous Duke Carl Theodore who won renown as an oculist, and performed many hundred successful operations on the poor. She interests herself especially in the sick and weakly of the poorer classes; has established hospitals and pharmacies for them, and made provisions for sending poor children for yearly visits to the seaside. She is loved by the people, and does all that can be done by a kindly heart to court their love. She is not yet greatly loved by the nobility. The great Belgian families, Ligne, Arenberg, Mérode, and others, resented the marriage of Prince Albert with a Bavarian Princess, of a line not in direct succession to the throne. They thought their own ranks as good, and resented their families being passed over. Moreover the Queen is small and slight. She did not, in their opinion, look the queenly part; but they were wrong; from the first she has both looked it and acted it. When King Albert opened the Parliamentary session of 1911, the Socialists created disgraceful and useless scenes in the streets and in the Chamber, yelling out demands for Universal Suffrage, and flinging bits of paper on which their demand was printed at the horses of the Queen's carriage, at the head of the King's charger, and, in the Chamber, in the face of the King himself. The Queen, who was accompanied by her two sons, the little Duke of Brabant and Count of Flanders, and the King's mother, the Countess of Flanders, bore herself royally, and looked admirable on that

trying day. Though the Socialists pelted her with their papers, she kept the windows of her carriage open. Though Socialists in the Chamber screamed with rage when some one had the daring to cry out in Flemish "Long live the Queen," she never blenched or ceased to smile. It was not fear of what happened, or might happen that caused the illness from which the Queen suffered shortly after: it was fatigue. King Albert, in his zeal as one newly come to the throne, performed all his functions during the period of the Brussels Exhibition of 1910 with excessive thoroughness. In every exhibition he visited, and there were dozens of exhibitions, besides the great exhibition itself, he paused at every stand, examined every work of art, spoke to every artist. At every exhibition, for hours he led a weary train of diplomatists and distinguished visitors from gallery to gallery—and he was generally accompanied by the Queen.

King Albert, in seeking to perform his duty, treats the leaders of every party with equal courtesy. He allows it to be thought he leans towards democracy. It was remarked when he opened the Parliament of 1911 that he did not assume his hat when reading his speech from the throne. He shows himself affable to such Socialists as their official position place in his path; and when the German Emperor came to Brussels, the chief members of the Liberal party were presented to him by King Albert at the gala representation at the opera house. The King's desire for the advancement of the interests of the working classes is real. Unlike King Leopold II, he does not look on men merely as tools. He takes a

human interest in their lives. He is the great patron of the fisher folk and sailors. His desire to appear democratic does not prevent him from being full of the pride of the Coburgs. If he remains uncovered when he addresses the Chambers in his court etiquette is more rigid than in the time of his predecessor, and ceremony more splendid.

Belgian politicians who thought King Albert a weakling, because he held his place biding his time in patience while his uncle reigned, were speedily undeceived when he came to the throne. King Albert's first act was to make a clean sweep of those who had been in King Leopold's service; from the highest court official to the lowest groom, all were dismissed with fitting recompense. Those who had been in King Albert's entourage, while he was heir apparent, were promoted to fill the chief places in the Royal household. They were men well chosen, drawn from each class and party, capable of keeping the King informed of the state of public opinion, and of the real needs and desires of the people.[1]

The first time King Albert felt himself called to assert his power in the direction of the Government was in connection with the ever thorny question of education. The Catholics had for years been ill content with the existing law. King Albert was not a year on the throne, before they planned to change it. Announcement of the coming change was made in the King's speech in November 1910, in these words:

[1] There is no Socialist actually in the King's service, but his chief aide-de-camp has the closest personal relations with the head of that party.

"It is to the father of the family the right belongs of watching over the education and instruction of his child, of choosing freely and with full independence the school to which he will confide it.

"My Government will propose measures to you for the efficacious guarantee of this imprescriptible right."

The new Education Bill was introduced into the Chamber on the 14th of March, 1911, by the Prime Minister, M. Schollaert. It made education obligatory, but proposed no other penalty for those who did not send their children to school than that of holding them up to public obliquy,[1] and, in order that every parent might freely choose what school he wished for his children, it proposed the issuing of tickets, or "Bons Scolaires," to parents for each of those children. These tickets handed to the schoolmaster would entitle him to payment for each child of a sum varying from thirty-two to thirty-six francs according to the locality in country or town in which the school was situated, a sum equivalent to about two-thirds of the actual cost of primary education, which is from forty to fifty francs a year. Private schools subject to State supervision were to be entitled to accept the "bons Scolaires." The difference between the actual cost of education and the sum paid by the State was to have been borne by communes, committees, or private individuals who owned the schools.

[1] A clause in the Bill which forbade the employment of children under fourteen years of age would be sufficient, its framers held, to cause parents to compel their children to attend school.

The Liberals and Socialists united in opposition to the Education Bill.

The rules of the Belgian Parliament require Bills to be reported on by Standing Committees, or Sections, before being debated on in the Chamber. The Committees are chosen by ballot, and the chance of the ballot gave the Liberals and Socialists majorities in the Sections in 1911. These parties adopted blocking tactics and prevented the measure from being laid before the Chamber, while they stirred up violent agitation against it in every place where they had a following. The complaints against the Bill were brought to the King's ears by members of his entourage, who declared the Government would fall if it pressed on with its measure. Thereupon the King took counsel with the President of the Chamber, M. Cooreman and, separately, with Messrs. Beernaert and Woest—members of the Catholic party, who, having held office in previous Governments, were able and willing to criticize the existing Government. None of those whose opinion King Albert asked approved of the Bill. One of them, M. Woest, declared his intention of openly opposing it in the Chamber.[1]

[1] M. Woest, chief of the Conservative Section of the Catholic party, when a member of the Cabinet, had been instrumental in framing the Education Law of 1884, and had been driven from office by King Leopold II, because of his ultra-reactionary policy. Though he did not again return to office M. Woest retained great influence, and the amendment of the Education Law in 1895 was largely inspired by him. M. Woest as long ago as 1906 expressed the opinion, to the author, that it would be fatal for the Catholics to give non-official schools subsidies equal to those granted to official schools. He contended that if the State paid the non-official schools anything approaching

Having fully informed himself of the opinions of the critics and opponents of the Government, the King sent for the Prime Minister and gave him to understand that in his opinion the Bill, impossible to pass, should be dropped. M. Schollaert, after a moment's hesitation, obeyed the Royal injunction. He withdrew his Bill and resigned office; being succeeded by the Baron de Broqueville.

In this instance King Albert showed the spirit of mastery, the determination to dictate to the Government which his predecessors, King Leopold I and King Leopold II had shown.

The King's action made the Catholics in and out of Parliament indignant. Until he interposed in the Education Question, every Catholic in Belgium lauded him; the moment he interposed to force the withdrawal of the Bill, the Catholics united in decrying him, and belittling all his actions. The strength he showed in dictating to the Prime Minister was weakness, they declared. The King, they whispered, was as frightened by the red flag of the Socialists as a bird might be by a scarecrow.

All this was the grumbling of a disappointed party. The King showed strength, not weakness. He was fully within his right as a Constitutional ruler in consulting the politicians whose advice he sought. He followed a custom established in other continental countries, notably in France, in consulting the President of the Chamber, and the others he consulted were Ministers d'Etat, or

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their full expenses, it should have the power to regulate their teaching; a dangerous power in a State whose Government might one day fall into the hands of Liberals or Socialists..

Privy Councillors, whose rank entitled them to advise the Crown.

It may be that those who advised the King were wrong in their outlook. It was made unmistakably clear by a dramatic action of the Catholics in the Chamber, that M. Woest was the only member of their party who opposed the Education Bill.

The elections which took place in June 1912 also proved unmistakably that the Catholic party had the country with it.[1]

Whether King Albert was well or ill advised is beside the question. His action in what he was led to believe was a crisis, proved him to be a King, determined to interpose with all his weight when he considered interposition needed for the people's good. The lending of his ear to all those who approached him, showed his desire to be guided by the people's will.

Though the party in power grumbles in secret, the people who have elected that party uphold the King. King Albert is the most popular King who has sat on the throne of Belgium. His subjects know he is resolved to rule strongly for them. Already he is acclaimed "The People's King." It is not vain popularity he works for, but the real welfare of the people. The organizers and supporters of the strike of 1913 who counted on King Albert to play their game counted most falsely. No Coburg, and none in whom the blood of the

[1] Baron de Broqueville, in succeeding M. Schollaert, announced his intention of continuing his predecessor's policy, and declared he would introduce an Education Bill on the same lines as that of M. Schollaert into the next Parliament, altering only the method of paying school-teachers, probably by the substitution of capitation grants for the "bons scolaires."

Hapsburgs flows, is a coward. For the people the King faced the mob. As his grandfather had so often tried he sought to bring about a union, or, at least, a coalition of parties to settle questions on the broad lines of which all are, in reality, in accord; but when it was made clear to him that on other, and equally great questions no union was possible, he ceased to insist, and consented to nominate as head of the Government, Baron de Broqueville, whose policy was that of Schollaert.

When the political strike of the Socialists took place in April 1913, efforts were made to draw the King into the dispute, and his name was used by those who sought to overturn the Government, but these efforts were without avail. Politicians' spite is a fit pendant to the people's love. Belgium has a King who inclines to no party, is swayed by no clique, but, with even mind, seeks ever the advancement of his people and his country's good.

CHAPTER X

AGRICULTURE

In *Vingt-cinq Années de Gouvernement*, the account of its stewardship published in 1910, the Catholic party boasted that under its impulse vast agricultural development had taken place in Belgium in the preceding quarter of a century, by which, above all, the labouring classes of the country profited. Facts justified that boast.

Proofs of the parcelling out of the land in small holdings are apparent everywhere: they are most evident in the districts about cities, between Brussels and Antwerp, for example, and within radii of thirty kilometres around large towns, such as Ghent, Namur and Liége. These districts are covered by market gardens and vineries. Intensive culture provides livelihood for thousands of families. The profits gained by it have enabled large numbers of cultivators to take advantage of the law on workmen's dwellings, and, on easy terms, to become proprietors of houses and small plots. Their proprietorship has fixed firmly on the land thousands, who, without it, would be forced to migrate to the towns to earn their living.

Small holdings are the rule in Belgium; but until recently ownership, or the fixed tenure of small farms, was the exception. Even now, great numbers of the holders of small and medium sized farms have

no leases; they hold their farms on verbal agreements, tacitly renewed, but liable, every year, to be ended without notice on the part of the landlords.

There are four categories of landowners in Belgium :—the State, Communes, and Public Establishments, great landowners; bourgeois families; and peasant proprietors. In the census of 1911 the State was returned as possessing 61,880 acres of forest land, chiefly in the provinces of Luxembourg, Liége, and Brabant, and 16,900 acres of uncultivated land, the camp of Beverloo, the Polygone of Brasschaet, the alluvion of the Scheldt, the fanges of the Hertogenwald forest, and the dunes. The ownership of the communes has been greatly decreased by the law, passed in 1847, making it possible to oblige communes to sell their uncultivated lands. In 1910 the communes possessed no more than 102,777 acres of uncultivated land, situated chiefly in the provinces of Limbourg, Luxembourg, and Antwerp. The census of 1910 gave, in addition, as property of the communes, 424,435 acres of wood, the greater part situated in Luxembourg, Namur and Liége. Certain hospitals and bureaux de bienfaisance were also returned as large landowners, the hospitals of Ghent, for example, owners of 9,463 acres, and hospitals of Bruges, Brussels, and Tournai.

No definition exists of what is large or small proprietorship. What would scarcely be looked on as a medium-sized property in East Prussia, would be considered a large one in Belgium, where two hundred and fifty acres seems a large property. The statistical returns of the Belgian Government are silent regarding the number of great landlords.

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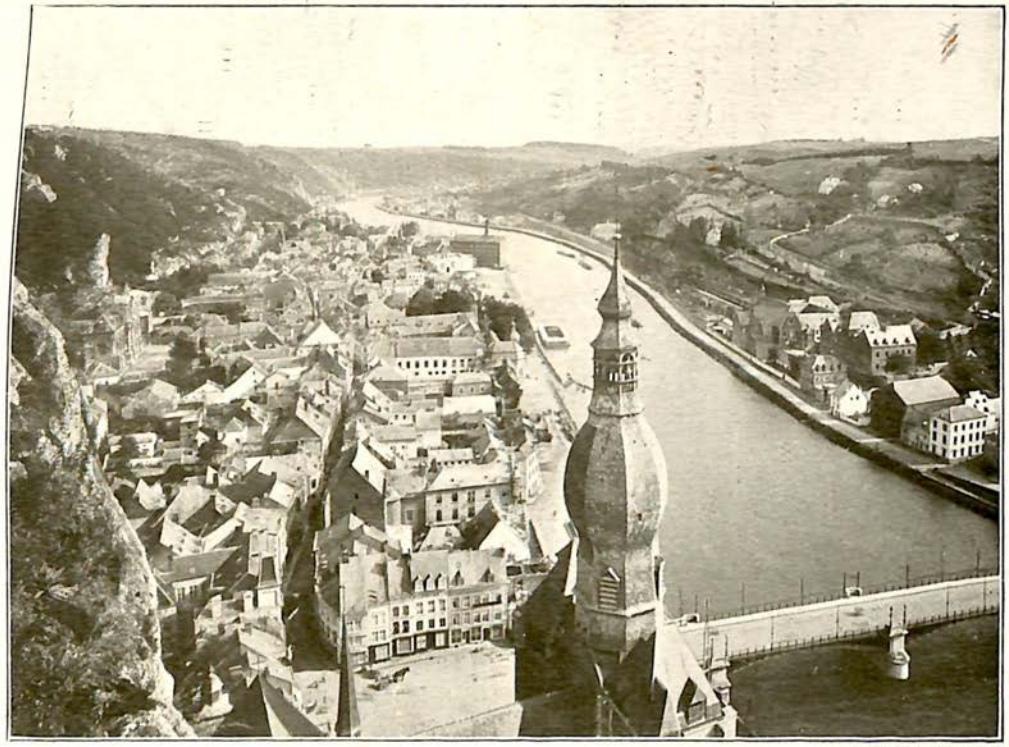
A FLEMISH MILKMAID WITH CART AND DOG

In 1900 Emile Vandervelde, leader of the Socialists, published a return founded on a search in the State Records, made at different dates in various provinces. The return showed that no significant change in the number or extent of large holdings had taken place. According to it there existed in 1844–45, 1,787 ownerships of more than 250 acres, representing a total ownership of 950,000 acres, and in 1898–99, 1,749 ownerships representing property of 978,000 acres. The Socialist inquirer concluded from his investigations that large properties were cut up for building ground in the vicinity of towns, that in districts farther removed, but still under the direct influence of the towns, concentrations of property took place; while the division of large properties took place in the districts removed from the influence of large towns, the law requiring the splitting up of property amongst heirs not being counteracted by purchases in these districts. Small properties as well as those of medium size are held by bourgeois families. The Belgian bourgeois buys land for an investment, and lets it at a rate equivalent to the current rate of interest on the purchase money.

In some regions there are many old farmers, landowners, who, because labour is scarce, let portions of their land, and themselves cultivate small parcels which they retain in their own hands. The fact that the social influence of this class of owners depends on the extent of their properties accounts for land being retained which its owners are obliged to mortgage, or let. The number of peasant proprietors who themselves cultivate all the land they own is not as large, in proportion, in

Belgium as in France and Germany. It is lessening. The Belgian law of succession is a cause of this. The peasant proprietor does not abandon his calling willingly. A small farm cannot be divided equally between the children of its owner, as the law requires. When partition is not possible, the property is offered for sale. It is generally purchased by one of the family, who places himself heavily in debt to pay off his brothers and sisters. The property thus bought is mortgaged, and, often, in the end the mortgagee becomes the proprietor. In a country such as Belgium, where large families are the rule, the law of succession entailing the division of properties inevitably leads to this result. The fact that where such a law is in force so many peasant proprietors manage to exist as are still found in the country, is due partly to the cheapness of land in the less populous districts, which enables peasants to buy in their paternal farms without having to expend over much capital, partly to the measures taken by the Government to favour the preservation of small rural holdings.

In his monograph on the agricultural development of Belgium since 1830, Emile Vliebergh recalls the efforts of the Government to populate the almost desert campine, which extends over parts of the provinces of Antwerp and Luxembourg, with farmers from overcrowded Flanders. The first effort was made in 1840, after a famine in Flanders caused by the failure of a potato crop. The effort consisted in the construction of twenty small farms, a church and a school, together with new roads, and a navigable branch of the canal at the junction of the Scheldt and the Meuse. Each farm con-



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THE VALLEY OF THE MEUSE AT DINAUT

tained a hectare (about two acres and a half) of land cleared and prepared for cultivation, about two and a half acres of irrigated land, and about seven and a half acres of heather. The experiment was not a success. Sickness discouraged the colonists; they abandoned the farms, and returned to their native districts. Since then the Government has not attempted direct intervention, but has framed laws to facilitate the acquisition and the preservation of small properties. In certain districts of the campine peasant proprietorship has been created by the sale to the inhabitants of small parcels of uncultivated land, by the Communal Councils. At Genek, in the Limbourg campine, between a hundred and fifty and a hundred and sixty families have become owners, and a hundred of these families obtain sufficient for their support from their farm without seeking work elsewhere. Seventy years ago, Genek was cited as a poor commune, to-day it is one of the richest villages in the Limbourg campine. The example of one of the landowners of the commune is typical of Belgian industry and success. This man, a farm servant, was penniless when he married. He borrowed seventeen francs with which to buy bare necessities. For years he continued to work daily for large farmers. In the mornings he cleared furze and reclaimed his own plot. When he died, thirty years after his marriage, he owned a farm on which he had two horses, the maximum for the ordinary farms of the district, and twenty head of cattle. In Genek, the small farmers join together, to buy properties offered for sale, which they parcel out into as many as ninety lots, and distribute amongst

themselves, withdrawing or borrowing for the purchase sums of money, amounting to as much as thirty thousand francs, from the local loan and savings bank they have established on the Raiffeinsen system.

Four million nine hundred and seventy-two thousand acres are under cultivation. Calculating their average value at from three to four thousand francs a hectare (from £48 to £64 an acre), taking into account the capital engaged in rural constructions, as well as in the exploitation of the farms, it is estimated that the total value of Belgian agriculture is four hundred million pounds sterling, and its annual product worth eight million pounds.

The Belgian Government has succeeded in adopting its legislative and administrative system to the needs of the country, whose comparatively immense population makes ceaseless labour and intense cultivation a necessity.

The Belgian possesses energy and initiative, tempered by almost excessive prudence. He has a passion for liberty, and does not readily support the intervention of the State. Yet, the State has intervened successfully for the development of agriculture, by means of prizes, subsidies, and indemnities; this is described in Belgium as interior protection. Protection against foreign competitors is more openly given. To that the Belgian farmers make no objection; it keeps up the price of cattle and farm produce.[1]

[1] I might have added in the text, "and leads to continual outcries in the towns at the high price of meat, butter, etc.," but then a digression on the tariff question would have been necessary. Suffice to say Belgium is to-day a semi-protectionist country.

The manufacturing industries of Belgium increase daily. Districts which were exclusively agricultural a few years ago are now black with the smoke from manufactury chimneys. The cheap tickets issued on the State Railways to workmen bring whole armies of artisans to the cities and workshops every morning from the heart of the country. Notwithstanding the science and energy with which it is pursued, and the intense methods the usage of which draws large profits from small morsels of land, agriculture tends to lose its place as the chief national industry of Belgium. According to the latest census 1,204,810 people are employed in agriculture, while those engaged in other industrial and commercial occupations are 1,757,489. Of the whole population of the country 18·79 are returned as being employed in agriculture at the present time, whereas 24·98 were returned as being employed in the pursuit in 1846. Of the agriculturists at the present time 42·82 per cent. are returned as being women.

Machinery has not introduced as noticeable changes in agriculture as in other industries. Perhaps the most remarkable change in Belgian farms is the disappearance of fallow ground. The usage of manure has abolished what was supposed to be the necessity of allowing land to lie idle for a time to rest itself. The fall in prices increased the Belgian farmers' determination to get the greatest possible value out of the land, and led them to make intense farming a fine art. The cultivation of cereals destined for human consumption has decreased, because of the competition of Roumanian growers up to the time of the war in 1912, and now

of growers in the United States, but that of oats and rye, used almost exclusively for cattle feeding, has increased. A fall in prices and a series of bad harvests between 1870 and 1880 obliged the farmers to turn their attention to cattle raising, to which they previously attached secondary importance, even going to the length of looking on cattle as evils necessary for the production of manure. The dairy industry was considered, up to that period, as of small value. To-day, in certain regions, agricultural farms are kept up for the sole purpose of raising food for cattle, and the annual value of the milk produced is £16,039,000, while the earnings of the co-operative creameries amount to £1,600,000.[1]

The success of the Belgian creameries is due to the Government. The changes in the manner of handling milk and manufacturing butter made in Denmark and other countries passed almost unperceived by Belgian farmers until, in 1888, the Government determined to spread technical instruction throughout the farming districts in such a manner that continued ignorance on the people's part would be impossible. Itinerant teachers were appointed who brought their lessons to the homes of the farm girls who had neither time nor means to frequent ordinary agricultural schools. Immediate

[1] In considering these, and all other figures relating to agriculture in Belgium, it must be borne in mind that out of the 7,277,440 acres which the Belgian kingdom contains only 4,288,350 are under cultivation, excluding forests, parks, nurseries, vineries, and waste land. The number of horned cattle kept in the country, 1,421,000, is out of proportion with the extent of grass land. Cows are most frequently stall fed.

transformation of the dairy industry was the result. Before long there were 2,400 cream separators working in the country. The official action of the Catholic Government in appointing agricultural instructors was coincident with the great movement of the Catholic party for the formation of agricultural co-operative societies, to the development of which the farming class owes much of its prosperity, and the Catholic party its political power.

The first federation of Catholic societies was established in Belgium in 1867; but the co-operative movement did not become important until the Boerenbond, greatest of the agricultural organizations, was established in 1890. In August of that year the founders of the bond issued a manifesto announcing that it assumed a triple mission: the defence of the religious, moral, and material interests of the peasants; the improvement of agrarian legislation; and the co-operative organization of agriculture.

By means of a central committee the Boerenbond purchases raw material for those affiliated, but without obliging its members to maintain a general storehouse or furnish a common capital. It gives all who apply to it free information regarding prices and qualities, and obtains for its members analyses of stuffs which it forwards to the laboratories of the State. It has established in the guilds affiliated to it, over two hundred mutual societies for insurance against loss by the mortality of cattle; it provides its members with the means of effecting fire insurance at reduced rates; it has obtained the enactment of several useful laws; and, what its founders look on as the greatest of their

achievements, it has spread Raiffeinsen banks over the country. There are at present 1,237 agricultural co-operative societies formed on the lines of the Boerenbond in the country, with 73,951 members, the annual purchases of which exceed £730,800.

The Raiffeinsen banks were introduced into Belgium by the Abbé Mellaerts in 1892. These banks are primarily intended to provide financial aid to small farmers and cultivators to whom ordinary banking establishments would not make advances, either because they have no security to offer, or require loans too small to be worth dealing with. The banks consist of a number of local branches grouped around a central body, each of which local branches acts distinctly for itself. The operations of each branch are restrained to a small sphere of action, a village, a hamlet, or a parish, and, while the responsibility of members of each branch is unlimited for the debts of that branch, it does not extend beyond these debts. In this responsibility, limited to each member's own district, but unlimited for the transactions carried on in that district, lies the strength of the Raiffeinsen banks. There are 697 of these banks in Belgium affiliated to a central association. The central association receives the money of the branches on deposit, and acts as intermediary between them and the State Savings Bank, which the legislature placed at the head of all these banks with authorization to advance them money at three and a quarter per cent., and to accept their surplus funds on deposit at three per cent. These banks have 28,000 members. Their capital, paid up and

borrowed, amounts to £916,500, and the loans they make yearly to members exceed £440,000. Upheld by the Government, aided by powerful Societies of the Catholic Party, the small cultivators and the agricultural labourers found their condition improved continually during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and find it still improving. Nevertheless their situations are such as, set out on paper, may well seem appalling to those who cannot understand how men can live contented lives of ceaseless toil for ever on the verge of starvation. To observers who do not see beyond the surface there must appear ample cause for the indignation of the Socialists' leaders at the peasants of Flanders who, these Socialists declare, are such down-trodden slaves they do not realize their slavery, and cannot be roused to murmur, much less to revolt. Belgium, immensely rich, unceasingly active, most industrious land, is a land of small wages and unending toil. Sociologists of other countries lift their hands with horror at the meagre budgets of the Belgian toilers. Even Belgian scientists, comparing the manner of living of Belgian workers at home, and workers of the same class who emigrate to lands where pay is larger—the United States, for instance—are disposed to insist that the Belgians live frugally at home solely because they have not the means of doing otherwise. Such investigators find little comfort in the statements of Vliebergh, and others who share his views, that the people's situation has immensely improved. They argue that the scandal of men having to exist on something that is hardly a living wage is in no way lessened because their fathers before them

existed in a state of continual starvation. The improvement, certainly, is scant enough. Taking his examples from the campine, because that is the poorest part of the country, Vliebergh explains that in spite of some modifications made by the introduction of creameries, the work remains much as it was seventy years ago, but the food is better and more abundant. Between the years 1850 and 1870, he says, men still began their day's work, fasting, in the morning at four and five o'clock in the summer, and did not breakfast until after two or three hours of labour. Breakfast was composed of a bowl of buckwheat porridge with skim milk, after which work was resumed to midday. At dinner there was soup with a slice of rye bread, potatoes, and sometimes a slice of bacon. Between three and four o'clock in the afternoon there was a slice of bread and lard, or bread and thick cream, and in the evening potatoes and buttermilk. On Sunday mornings the bowl of porridge was sometimes replaced by bread and butter and coffee, "and then we thought it was a feast," said a reminiscent, aged man.

In winter one ate only three times a day: in the morning, at midday, and in the evening.

Another reminiscent old man told M. Vliebergh a story from which the sociologist concludes the people were not, in good truth, sufficiently nourished in the last generation: "My man was the son of a shopkeeper," says M. Vliebergh. "One day while he still attended school, his mother sent him to announce to the farmers, purveyors of the shop, that the price of butter was raised some centimes the pound. This good news was received with so

much enthusiasm that more than one farmer could find nothing better to offer the child, the son of the shopkeeper, than . . . a bit of bread and butter."

"It was the same old man," adds M. Vliebergh, "who said to me that in his youth fever was common enough in the region. 'There was only one person in the commune,' he added, 'who never got it, the curé, because he was sufficiently nourished.'" To-day, in the campine, the people eat five times a day: in the morning before going to work, before midday, at midday, in the afternoon, and in the evening. More bread is eaten, and more bacon, more herrings; but the second déjeûner—lunch—and the goûter, or afternoon repast, are not yet considered as regular meals. The campinois, a religious man, makes the sign of the cross and recites the Pater before and after the morning, midday, and evening repast; but he neglects the prayer before and after the lunch and afternoon goûter. This is a certain indication that the two repasts are novelties in his *régime*.

There are even now, notwithstanding the improvement, many peasants and agricultural labourers in the campine who are not sufficiently nourished. Mgr. Keesen, the Belgian Senator, realized this when he was a parish priest at Tessenderloo. He undertook a campaign for the popularization of herrings and haricots; buying herrings and retailing them to the peasants at what they cost him. In some years he sold 250,000 herrings.

The peasantry is better housed now-a-days as well as better fed. The hut-cellars, constructions one-half of the walls of which were the sides of pits, and the remaining half built up on the pits of the

earth dug out in making them, which had wooden chimneys, and were without windows, no longer exist as human dwellings as they did in the campine during the first half of the nineteenth century; but there still exist in the district many mud huts covered with thatch, with earthen floors, in which men live without pure air and without light. These huts are being gradually replaced by houses built of brick, often with tiled roofs. Their existance is not due to the impossibility of replacing them by better dwelling-houses, for the Government, and the mutual societies which exist everywhere in Belgium, have placed means within the reach of even the lowest paid workmen of building and owning suitable dwellings. Their continuance is due to the fact that mud huts are less damp than brick houses, and thatched roofs warmer in winter and cooler in summer than tiled roofs. There are, however, some regions in which, in spite of the Government and the efforts of the workmen's dwelling societies, there is a scarcity of houses, which the selfishness of landowners makes it impossible to overcome. Owners are known to pull down old houses and refuse to build new ones, because it is difficult to obtain more than the equivalent of two pounds a year rent from a farm labourer, and the rent paid for land is higher when it is cleared from buildings.

In the campine districts labourers' wages are on an average 1 franc 44 centimes a day, without food, or 84 centimes with food. Elsewhere in Belgium wages are higher. They have risen everywhere in the country since 1846, the year in which full statistical returns were first compiled for

Belgium. In 1846 for all Belgium the average wages of men, agricultural labourers, were 1 franc 80 centimes a day, without food, and 72 centimes a day with food; for women they were 60 centimes a day without food, and 40 centimes a day with food. They average now 1 franc 98 centimes a day for men, without food, and 1 franc 22 centimes a day with food; and for women 1 franc 21 centimes a day, without food, and 74 centimes a day with food.

In 1848 the Government published the report of its Commission of Inquiry into the situation of the Working Classes. The report concluded with the statement that "the misery, the want of nourishment sufficiently good and abundant, the bad state of habitations, the uncleanliness, the ignorance and forgetfulness of hygenic principles, deprivation of all sorts, are joined to other causes we have enumerated to ruin the health and abridge the existence of the working classes." In those years the peasantry of the Flemish-speaking districts described their existence in a song, the refrain of which was "potato peels and fishes' skins are all the feast the peasants have."

Farmers who lived themselves on bowls of porridge and scanty crusts cannot have laid great meals before their labourers; but M. Vliebergh thinks it is to be regretted that the habit of farmers feeding the labourers they employ tends to die out.

Distance is disregarded by Belgian workmen. It is an increasing custom for agricultural work to be undertaken by bands of men who travel from farm to farm, led by a foreman, who acts at once

as spokesman for the men and overseer for the employers. At least fifty thousand Flemish labourers penetrate into France, central and northern, every year for the harvest. As harvesters they each gain as much as forty pounds. Returned to their Flemish firesides with the money intact in their pockets, they do not sit idle the winter through. They turn to small home industries. There are many villages around Alost in which the whole population, male and female, is regularly employed during the winter making lace. The statistics show there are forty thousand male lace makers in the country; and, as in many other cases, the figures under-estimate the total, for in the statistics, generally, the chief, not all the occupations of the people are counted, and a man is more likely to return himself as a harvester, or agricultural labourer, than as a lace-maker.

No line that can be traced divides town from country in Belgium. There are no villages, broadly speaking, that are purely agricultural. Men who labour in the towns continue to reside in the most distant parts of the country, rising in the first hours after midnight to tramp miles along dark roads to a railway station, and travel thence almost incredible distances, day after day, by train to their work. These are the workmen whom astonished tourists see sleeping in doorways and by roadsides in the streets and suburbs of Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent, or any of the Belgian cities during the midday hour of rest, and snoring in the evening, their weary bodies piled on top of each other, on the benches and floors of the waiting-rooms of railway

stations, and in the third class railway carriages. The daily draft of such workmen to the towns is made possible by cheap workmen's tickets.

It is not avarice, but necessity, which makes the Belgian farmer a payer of low wages. The generous actions of the farmers, little though they cost, are sufficient to change the lives of the workmen and their families from misery to contentment. In the case of sickness in a workman's family there is gratuitous help from the farmer. The farmer gives skim milk for nothing, or at the most trifling price, to the labourers; often he gives the free use of potato gardens to his labourers, or the labourers themselves own patches of land which their wives and children cultivate, on which they feed cows, goats, or rabbits. The agricultural associations largely come to the aid of the farm labourers. They procure seeds of various kinds for the labourers on the same advantageous terms as chemical manures for the farmers. Formerly in the campine and about Louvain, there were private individuals, and even societies that hired cows at weekly or monthly rents to small farmers. For the use of such cattle no fixed bail was given. The owners reserved the right of selling them whenever it seemed good to them, the difference between the price at which they were bought and that obtained by their sale being divided between the owner and the tenant of the beasts. The hire of cows on such terms was costly. The smallest charge was 20 per cent. of the value of the cattle, the average was 40 or 45 per cent., and it was known to have mounted to 102 per cent. The Raiffeinsen

and other local saving and credit banks now enable the small farmers and labourers to free themselves from such usury, and become owners of their cattle. Men borrow from the local banks sums of three or four hundred francs to buy cows, paying them back by fortnightly or monthly instalments spread over four or five years, the cattle being insured during the interval by the local insurance society. The local insurance societies specially benefit the small owners. M. Vliebergh cites the case of Berthem, a commune in the outskirts of Louvain which has 2,200 inhabitants, and, in the commune, 260 stables satisfying the conditions of admission to the local insurance societies; 220 amongst the proprietors of these had 408 beasts insured. Every one who owned only one cow had his cow insured.

These and other instances may seem signs of pitiably small improvement. To the peasants, who know themselves content, they are of great import. Even the old folk, in Belgium, as everywhere, praisers of past times, admit the advancement. "What has struck us most in our inquiry in the campine," says M. Vliebergh, "is the fact that we have not met one who has not said to us 'Our lives are better now than when we were young.'" The Belgians, ardent Celts, and sturdy Flemings, are not people who suffer without murmuring. Their history demonstrates that oppression drives them quickly to revolt. The tranquillity of the heavily burthened agriculturists does not prove, as the adversaries of the existing *régime* would have it, that they are slaves out of whom all spirit is crushed. It proves they find their burthens

bearable, their sufferings compensated for, and their lives sweet. It is by the people's stamina, not by chemical analysis of the ingredients of their dishes, that the quality of their food must be judged; it is not by the tables of wages, but by budgets of families that their means must be calculated; it is by their actions and their achievements, not by answers to schoolmasters, that their knowledge must be valued.

The health of the country is good. The number of centenarians in it is remarkable; the morality of the people wards off temptation to race suicide. The comfort of the peasant families is more astounding than the lowness of their wages. One out of every three of the population has money in the savings bank. Civilization is of ancient growth in Belgium. The people may not have followed extended school courses, but knowledge has been handed down to them by their parents, through many generations; they know much, and feel much. Critics, whose political passions blind them are more ignorant than they. Writing with bitter contempt of "Our Masters" in *Le Peuple*, Emile Vandervelde, the Socialist leader, describes Christmas at Bruges—

"At midnight on Christmas Eve, every year, thousands of pilgrims, workers and country folk unite at Bruges, on the Place du Bourg, and, to celebrate the birth of Christ, make a tour of the town, in procession, returning to their starting-place, the Chapelle du Saint Sang.

"From eleven o'clock in the evening, the ill-lit place commences to be filled with the crowd; only

a few bourgeois come out of curiosity, but an ever-increasing number of the poor, the men in skimpy coats and caps, the women enveloped in long black mantles, faintly silhouetted on the obscure background of the Chapelle and the Hôtel de Ville. The hour approaches. The crowd still increases. At the stroke of twelve three thousand folk, without a cry, without a word, without a murmur, without a priest to give them a signal, fall on their knees for a short prayer. Then, rising, always in the same silence, they flow away like a stream, to the Grand' Place. But soon the movement begins to quicken, it seems that, pressed to return to their homes in the villages, far off perhaps, the country folk are in haste to be finished. They finish the itinerary almost running, their sticks in their hands, their heavy shoes tapping the pavement. We soon lose sight of them. The Grand' Place, in which a few shops are brilliantly lighted, is a desert. The pilgrims have gone to the side of the railway station; but they will come back. They come. Two, almost children, traverse the immense square with gymnastic steps; others follow, not numerous yet, with the long strides of poor devils who have many kilometres to cover to get home. Some minutes pass. The great stream arrives at last, and during a quarter of an hour two or three thousand processionists of both sexes defile, and, in the glaring light which falls on their faces, exhibit all their traits.

"To see them thus, issuing out of the shade to repass into the shadow, one irresistibly feels he is regarding a painting of Laermans in which a troop

of human beings are flying towards the unknown. There is not a hope in those eyes; not a mystic expression on those faces. Nothing but the hard determined expression of peasants, bronzed by the sun, or, it may be, bleached by working in rooms; nothing but the poor and frail figures of workfolk who seem never to have even dreamt of a better lot.

"What a contrast with the other crowds encountered in the coal districts on feast days or during strikes. There, also, they are poor, ignorant, and disinherited of the goods and joys of life; but they have hope, and one feels elevated by the solidarity of a whole class.

"Here there is nothing similar. Nothing but misery with the fingers of an abortionist; misery, moral and material, which destroys all energy, which removes all hope, which suppresses in the slave the very desire of being free.

"And to think these are our Masters, these poor devils amongst the poor, whose passive resignation cements the social order. Without them the infinitesimal minority of rich and powerful could not prevent justice from being done. With them it has numbers, it has strength. The dead weight of this ragged proletariat ballasts the capitalist galley.

"What a length of time will be required, alas! to change that! The problem is not, let it be understood, to modify their beliefs, for it is sufficient to look at them to be convinced the majority of them have no beliefs, but feel the superstitions, follow ritual customs, obscure survivals of religious

practices transmitted mechanically from generation to generation. They are not, unfortunately, fanatics, whose fanaticism would be still idealism. They are the discouraged who fall on their knees before their God, as they fall on their knees before their master, to implore an alms, to beg a morsel of bread."

In this description by a hostile unbeliever of the ancient custom preserved by the peasantry of Flanders of making pilgrimages to holy shrines on Christmas morning, there is revealed the secret of the life of the Belgian peasants. M. Vandervelde's description of the scene at Bruges on Christmas Eve is just, up to the point where he states there is not a hope in the pilgrims' eyes; not a mystic expression on their faces. What prejudice prevented the Socialist leader from seeing himself, he has shown to others in his pen-picture. The Flemish peasant kneels to God, to praise Him. He cringes to no one. He no more flings himself at his master's feet whining for bread to-day, than his ancestors flung themselves at the feet of the French at Courtrai in 1302.

The Belgian peasant is as firm in his self-reliance as he is steadfast in his religious beliefs. Allowing for the differences of local colouring, as it is with the Flemish agriculturist, so it is with the Walloon. Men of Flanders and Brabant, of Liége and Luxembourg, with many surface differences, the agriculturists are the same throughout. Religious, they will have nothing to say with the irreligious Socialist whose strength lies in blasphemy, the burthen of whose song is the refrain, too vile to be quoted, of the International.

While the Belgian peasant turns with loathing

from the atheist Socialist, he grasps eagerly the hand held out to him by the religious organizer of mutual benefit societies. The Catholic party owes its hold on the country districts in a great degree to the manner in which it has helped farmers and labourers through its mutual organizations, the Boerenbond, or Peasants' League, and the Raiffeinsen Banks, which have, as already told, between them 101,951 members, spending yearly £1,170,800.

The Catholic party has held power uninterruptedly for close to thirty years; it claims the credit for all that has been done in that period in the name of the Government, and counts the subsidies granted by the Government to official and non-official societies as amongst its benefits. The Government donations to agricultural societies amounted to 151,000 francs (£6,040) in 1884. In each succeeding year they increased, reaching to 950,000 francs (£38,000) in 1906.

In 1910 the Catholics published a list of the legal measures which show the progress realized since 1884.

1. The law of the 26th of March, 1900, prolonging the duration of the National Bank, and placing under the category of commercial operations the purchases or sales made by or to agriculturists, of cattle, agricultural material, manure, produce, and generally, merchandise and provisions connected with the exercise of their industry.

2. The law of the 11th of May, 1900, modifying the *régime* of succession to small estates.

3. The laws and decrees suppressing the frauds committed by means of margarine.

4. The laws and decrees for the protection of the crops (1900–01); on the sanitary regulation on domestic animals (1900–01); on workmen's dwellings (1889).

5. The indemnities allowed to farmers for losses sustained in their stables; indemnities which amounted from 1884 to 1908 to more than £640,000.

6. The diverse methods in view of the amelioration of the strain of live stock, the expenses borne by the State for the execution of provincial regulations relative to this subject, have amounted to more than £320,000 in twenty-five years.

7. The measures in favour of the agricultural instruction, and the sum consecrated to its propagation in the country, £960,000.

8. The regular subsidies, more than £400,000 from 1884 to the present day, to private agricultural associations, which actually number seven thousand in the country.

9. The law of the 26th of June, 1896, creating a special fund of £400,000 for the reparation and amelioration of the highways and byways in agricultural districts. Under this law in twelve years, from 1896 to 1908, more than 4,000 kilometres of roadways of agricultural communes have been ameliorated, at a cost exceeding £560,000; £4,760,000 have been expended on the local roadways; £100,000 on the amelioration of non-navigable waterways; £1,560,000 on hygienic work, in all, under these three headings, more than six million sterling, of which the State contribution exceeded £2,480,000.

Agriculturists have been benefited in addition to the development of local railways by the

reduction of the transport tariff. Under the system in force of subsidies and protection, food—meat, butter, fruit, vegetables, etc.—is not of the cheapest, but it is brought to the consumer fresh and unadulterated, and Belgium herself produces all that her teeming population needs for its nourishment.

CHAPTER XI

COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

NAVIGATION was coastwise when Belgian commerce became universal. Sailors still lacked sufficient astronomical and physical knowledge to enable them to venture into mid-ocean. Ships, rarely decked, were propelled by oars; for security they voyaged in groups. In the height of the prosperity of Bruges Belgium possessed no shipping of importance. The Belgians left the transport industry to the Venetians and the Arabs; later, to the Hanseatic League, the combination of German cities formed in the middle of the thirteenth century to guarantee the security of routes and extend commerce.

The Hanseatic League ruled severely over the towns of its confederation, and those associated with it. The continual squabbles it occasioned, more than the silting of sand into the Zwyn, caused the removal of commerce from Bruges, bound to the League, to Antwerp where, with greater liberty, comers from outside could establish themselves as representatives of houses foreign to the Hansa.

Industry and commerce advanced with equal strides in Belgium. The geographical situation of the country made the mouths of her rivers natural ports for the shipping from the Mediterranean and the Baltic, and her rivers themselves the high-

ways of traffic between the Alps and the ocean. The configuration of the land, flat, or gently undulating, on two-thirds of the country, made the construction of roads easy.

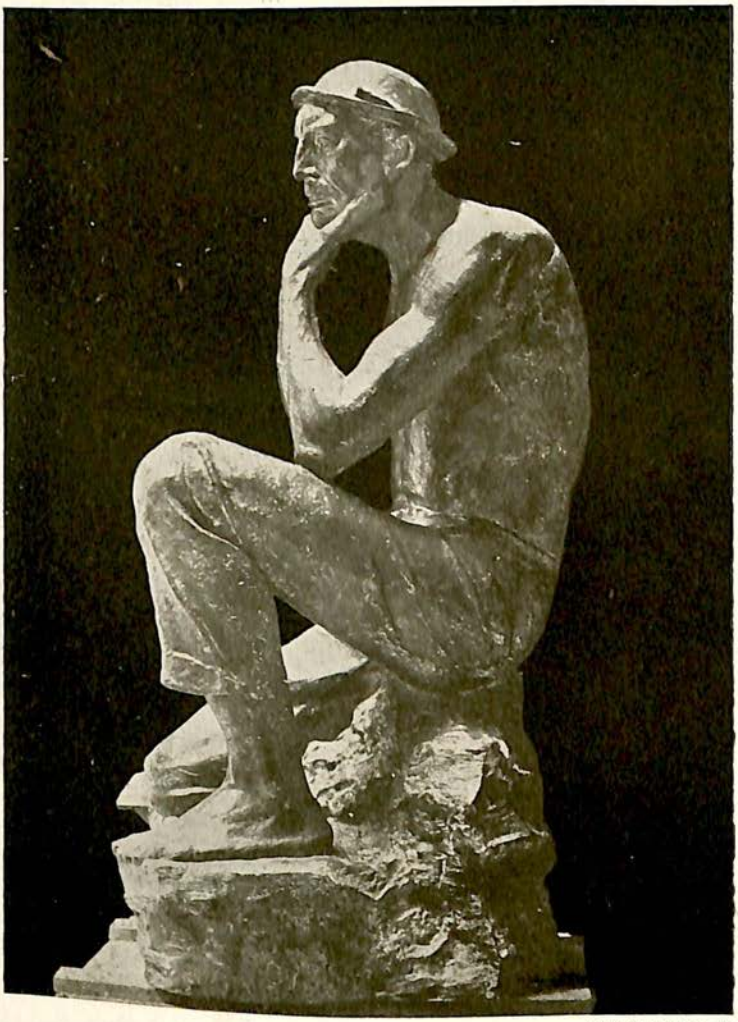
The mildness of the climate, free from excess of cold or heat, tempered by the Gulf Stream, encouraged activity. The geological construction of the land grouped together many different materials ready for the workmen's hands. Coal was known at Liége from time immemorial. On the rising ground around the site of the town it cropped up on the surface. So abundant was it there, it is thought its combustible properties were discovered by men who, having lit fires of wood on the ground, found the soil burn. Records exist dating from early in the thirteenth century of the regulation by the clergy of Liége of the extraction of coal on their property. Coal-beds lay above the valley of the Meuse, so situated that it was possible to extract the mineral by the construction of galleries which later served for the conduit of water. In the Borinage, the Charleroi district, the situation of the coal-beds was equally favourable. Natural circumstances likewise created populations of iron-workers. The mineral of iron was found in all the mountainous part of the country. The whole country was covered with thick forests; limonite, oligist, and maganiferous minerals were found in the same districts; so, in the earliest times, materials for the fabrication of iron were discovered side by side; and, centuries after, those for the fabrication of zinc. Metallurgic industry sprung easily into existence in districts so circumstanced. The nature of the soil made the inhabitants miners; it made

them also puddlers, flatteners, smiths, adjusters and armourers; as, centuries earlier, the nature of the soil of Flanders producing herbage which nourished sheep, caused men to become weavers.

From the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, all the industries of the country were developed to supply foreign demands, while meeting the needs of home consumers. Industry, it cannot be too often repeated, once created in Belgium, flourished unceasingly. It triumphed continually over the exhaustion of the supply of raw material at home, and the cessations of foreign supplies due to the hostilities of neighbouring lands.

In the fourteenth century the Flemish workmen were deprived of the use of English wool. Their energy survived immediate suffering; their skill was not allowed to become useless: the manufacture of linen was substituted for that of cloth. For the new industry Flemish flax was first used; later, as the Flemish product became costly, the weavers learned to use the coarser and less costly Russian flax. At the end of the eighteenth century cotton made its appearance on the market. The cotton industry was speedily established at Ghent, where the skilled workmen readily adapted themselves to it. Before the end of the eighteenth century Flanders used 460,000 lbs. of cotton. In 1830 its consumption in that province amounted to 12,000,000 lbs.

In that year, when the Belgians asserted their independence, theirs was no ruined state. The French Revolution had destroyed much in Belgium, but its hewing down of privilege was not wholly deplorable. Long before the upheaval of 1780 the



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A WALLOON MINER RESTING
(*After the sculpture by Constantin Meunier*)

princes who ruled over Belgium had realized that the city guilds of that country had outpassed their use, and that industry was best aided in being liberated from their bonds. The extension to Belgium of the fiscal law of 1791, abolishing the guilds, freed enterprise from trade restrictions, and opened so wide a way to technical development that in regarding its advantages none took heed of the fact that in pulling down the barriers of trade privileges it set up no barricades against oppression by employers. The increase of production was the great aim which dominated the political economy of the time. It was the Constituent Assembly which laid the foundation of the laws on trade marks and patents.

Napoleon gave lavish proofs of his interest in manufactories and workshops. What Belgians call the fundamental charter of their mining and metallurgic industries is contained in a law which was enacted in 1810. It is characteristic of Napoleon's view that he caused the opening of a mine to be treated not as an ordinary commercial enterprise but as a public service. The Dutch Government, to which the rule over Belgium passed in 1815, preserved the industrial legislation of the French Republic and Empire, but modified the financial *régime*. It was the Dutch tendency towards free trade, maintained in the interests of the traders and shipowners of Holland, as much as any other cause, which led to the Belgian Revolution of 1830. Napoleon had habituated the Belgians to an ultra-protectionist *régime*. Regulations published by the new Government in 1816, reducing dues, gave rise to numerous protests on the part of Belgian

traders. To appease the Belgians without displeasing the Dutch, a Commission was nominated, on the recommendations of which a fund, known as the Merlin Million, was established for the distribution of bonuses to industries, and a Customs Law was passed. The Merlin Million soon degenerated into a political fund, and disappeared with political changes, but the Customs Law remained; made in 1822 in the epoch of sailing ships and diligences, it is still in vigour to-day, notwithstanding the protestations which commercialists have addressed regularly to the Government and legislature during the last forty years.

In 1822 on the King's impulsion the Ministry created the Société Générale at Brussels, with a capital of fifty millions of francs (two million sterling). In 1824 the Handels Maatschappij was founded at Rotterdam. These powerful banking institutions contributed largely to the revival of the cotton industry of Ghent, and facilitated the exploitation of the West Indian colonies of the Low Countries.

At the fall of the French Empire Ghent possessed twenty spinning mills with 85,000 spindles; in 1826 it had 150,000 spindles; in 1830 it had 285,000 spindles; at the moment of the Belgian revolution the number had increased to 400,000, and from the fifteen works of calico printers in Ghent there were produced 300,000 pieces a year. The annual fabrication of the cotton industry was valued at that period at forty millions of francs (£1,600,000 sterling). The Ghent manufacturers sold their production in both parts of the kingdom of the Low Countries and largely in the West Indies. The revolution cut off profitable markets from them, but the Dutch

custom they lost was gradually replaced by trade with Germany, Switzerland and other lands.

Like Ghent, Antwerp prospered immensely under the Dutch rule. The pages of the chronicles of the sixteenth century glow with descriptions of the prosperity of that Belgian port, which contained a hundred thousand inhabitants and saw five hundred ships arrive at its quays in a single day. The movement of these vessels must have been picturesque, their arrival cannot have failed to create great bustle; but one transatlantic liner prosaically steaming into its appointed berth in Antwerp docks to-day draws a greater tonnage than the whole five hundred ships contending for anchorage at the quays of Antwerp in the sixteenth century.

In the height of its prosperity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as later, Antwerp remained, as Bruges had done, without a Belgian marine. Foreign shipping was driven away from the port by the revolution of the sixteenth century, the Spanish domination, and the wars of Spain against Holland, France and England; above all, by the closing of the Scheldt by the treaty of Münster in 1648. It was not until 1795, by the treaty of the Hague, that the liberty of navigation was restored to the Scheldt. The nominal reopening of the river was, at first, of little advantage, for the *régime* of assignats and the blockade of the Flemish ports hindered Belgian trade. In 1802 Antwerp received nearly a thousand ships, drawing 36,000 tons. In 1805, 2,400 vessels entered the port with 135,000 tons. The continental blockade, decreed in 1806, pulled down the number of the ships entering Antwerp to 1,350 with 75,000 tons in 1807. In 1809 the number

of ships arrived at Antwerp fell down to 250. With peace the numbers mounted up again, but the improvement was not great until the transfer of the government to Holland. The period of Dutch rule opened with a maritime movement of 3,000 ships at Antwerp in 1815; 3,700 in 1816. In 1817 it fell to 999, but that year is memorable as being the first in which a steamer arrived at the Belgian port. With various fluctuations the shipping at Antwerp arrived at 720 ships drawing 120,000 tons in 1830, the year of the Belgian revolution. The efforts the Dutch had made to create a mercantile marine at Antwerp had been fruitless. In 1830 the number of ships belonging to that port was only 112, and their tonnage amounted to no more than 30,000 tons. The largest vessel owned by a Belgian shipowner was the *Schimmelpenning*, a three-master of eleven hundred tons. The greatest benefit which the government of King William I of Holland bestowed on the Belgian port was its connection with the other cities of the kingdom by good roads and navigable waterways. The inhabitants of Antwerp, reminiscent of royal benefits, remained Orangists. They upheld the Dutch power as long as they were able; but when Antwerp passed to the new kingdom of Belgium, the Dutch took no account of this, and did all they could to ruin the port they had made prosperous. The Dutch were not driven out from the citadel of Antwerp until December 1832. The command of the Scheldt remained longer in their hands. In spite of the Great Powers they revived the clauses of the treaty of Münster which forbade all navigation on the Scheldt. They ignored the proclamation of

the freedom of the river, made in 1832, and it became necessary for Belgium, in the interests of her commerce, to consent, in 1838, to the payment to Holland, by way of compensation, of a tax of a florin and a half a ton on the ships entering Antwerp. This tax was a drag on the exterior commerce of Belgium. In 1855 negotiations for its capitalization were set on foot, and in 1862 they were brought to a successful conclusion.

At the moment of the political revolution of 1830 the industrial revolution brought about by the introduction of steam power had not yet taken place. The strength of the steam pumps of the coal mines was only 10,000 horse-power for all Belgium; considerably less than the strength of the steam power used to-day at the single factory of Cockerill's at Seraing.

In 1830 there were 225,000 persons engaged in the ordinary trades, carpenters, tailors, bootmakers, sabot makers, bakers, etc., either working alone, on their own account, or as employers at the head of small establishments with few workmen. Next in numbers came those who worked at home. These were most numerous in the flax industries, there being 280,000 spinners and 75,000 weavers, with 50,000 helps; in all 400,000 scattered between the small towns and villages of Flanders, families working together in their own houses; the weavers going, as a rule, themselves to sell the stuff they manufactured at the nearest markets. Thousands of home workers were employed on lace-making in Brussels and the principal Flemish towns. In the Walloon district home work occupied twenty or twenty-five thousand people, of whom half lived in the province of Liége. Those were mostly

engaged in the nail-making, armourers', hardware and cutlery trades. In the summer time many of those who worked at home in the winter went to the fields as farm labourers, or were employed in the building trade.

The next category was composed of those engaged in workshops and manufactories, in casting iron, manufacturing utensils of forged and hammered iron, machines, implements, glass, porcelain, chemical products, cotton stuffs, woollens, paper, etc. Generally, the number of workmen employed in any establishment was under a hundred. In workshops and manufactories, the use of steam power was uncommon; there were in all only 184 machines worked by steam, nearly all of them used in the cotton industry localized about Ghent, and in the cloth industry at Verviers. The most powerful of these machines was of eighty horse-power. In a third category were the quarries and mines; 30,000 workers were employed in the coal mines, 10,000 of whom were in the province of Liége.

The three first years after the separation of Belgium from Holland were marked by the economic marasmus which political agitation engenders. In 1834 the renaissance became manifest.

Capital abounded in Belgium. The country already possessed a numerous class of Rentiers, small capitalists, people who lived on their savings, fruit of laborious years, invested in Government funds, similar to the French *Rentes*. Appeal was made to the Rentiers, who confided their funds to Limited Liability Companies. The employment of machines became general. The need of iron for their construction, and of coal for their working,

entailed the development of coal mining, and the establishment of numbers of blast-furnaces, iron manufactories, and manufacturing workshops.

The use of the steam motor, alimented by coke, liberated metallurgic industry from the necessity of locating itself in places where there were rivers, sources of water power, and forests, sources of combustibles. In the arrondissement of Charleroi fourteen blast-furnaces were constructed between 1834 and 1838. At the close of the year 1838, £2,400,000 were invested in coal mines, with the result that the production of the mines in which the capital was invested was increased by 42 per cent. The other industries of Belgium were revived at the same time by a lavish infusion of capital. £300,000 was invested by the public in glass works; as much in the mechanical flax spinning; in the sugar refineries, in the printing trade; banks and other financial establishments received £3,200,000. Most of the new companies were formed under the patronage of the Banque de Belgique, established in 1835, with a capital of £800,000, and of the Société Générale pour favoriser l'industrie nationale, an establishment received with little favour at the commencement because of its Orange origin. The total value of the shares in Belgian industrial enterprises issued from 1834 to 1838 was estimated at 350 million francs (fourteen million sterling). Modern industry was thus implanted in Belgium. From £4,600 a year the cost of the importation of machines mounted in five years to nearly £200,000, and the exportation from £32,000 to £240,000. The establishment of Cockerill, the English manufacturing engineer, at Seraing, already employed

2,200 workmen. All the new energy created was not wisely directed. A crisis in 1839 led to the disappearance of rashly constructed ventures, and caused the ruin of many who had grasped too wildly at fortune; but the evolution of Belgian industry continued. The statistics relating to steam power reveal the colossal industrial development of the country in the nineteenth century. In 1830, as has been said, the total number of machines actuated by steam, in the country, was 400, with 12,000 horse-power. According to the latest published statistics, for industrial purposes, exclusive of railways and steamboats, Belgium has now in her industry 27,816 machines, actuated by steam with 2,671,418 horse-power.

Forty-nine per cent. of the inhabitants of Belgium, male and female of every age, work at regular callings. Numbers belong to more than one trade, following totally different occupations in different seasons, such as the men inhabiting Brabant villages who are brick-makers or harvesters in summer and autumn, and lace-makers in winter. To these each of their trades is of equal importance. They work with equal regularity at each. There are others of the labouring class who have some subsidiary occupations, or means of making money, of small importance in themselves, useful mainly as affording ample materials for those who indulge in the fascinating pastime of juggling with statistics. Chief of the subsidiary occupations is that of the majority of those who figure in the reports of temperance societies as the keepers of beer-houses. In Belgium no special licence is required for the sale of liquor, or the opening of a public-house,

but, obviously, those who sell drink must observe the police rules regarding the proper conduct and sanatory conditions of public establishments. There exists a law of obligatory closing of public-houses in Belgium, but it passes unnoticed, for every one is in bed during the hours it may be enforced, and the keepers of public-houses, even in the largest cities, close long before they are obliged to do so by law. The sole special obligation on those who sell drink on their premises is the payment of an extra tax. For those who sell nothing stronger than beer, the extra tax is light. The consequence is that every one of the poorer class, labourer, lace-maker, washerwoman, barber, or what not who has a house by which strangers pass, buys four or five bottles of beer for six or seven pence, puts one in the window as a sign, and is in readiness to retail drink at a halfpenny a glass, and swell the teetotal orators' list of abominations.

More than forty per cent. of labourers in Belgium are occupied in handicrafts, other than those of agriculture. A curious calculation of Emile Vandervelde's based on the supposition that one horse-power is equal to ten men, shows that the increase of the industrial output of Belgium is equivalent to the output of the work of four million three thousand workmen, in addition to the output of the actual industrial population, which was one million one hundred and two thousand when he made the calculation.

The value of the exports from Belgium amounted in 1831 to £3,862,210; in 1912 the value of the exports from the country was £158,059,143. In 1831 the value of the imports to Belgium was £3,599,542;

while in 1912 their value was £198,320,367. In 1831 the population of the country was 4,089,553 persons; on the 31st of December, 1912, it was 7,571,387.

In 1912 the value of Belgium's imports from and exports to the countries with which she chiefly trades was:

Imports.	£	Exports.	£
1. France	36,321,920	1. Germany (Customs Union)	40,298,760
2. Germany (Customs Union)	28,124,800	2. France	30,092,560
3. Great Britain	20,221,080	3. Great Britain	21,611,600
4. United States	16,553,160	4. Holland	14,703,960
5. Holland	14,262,920	5. United States	5,805,120
6. Argentine Republic	12,220,960	6. Argentine Republic	3,706,440
7. Russia	10,893,080	7. Russia	3,339,840
8. Indian Empire	9,982,040	8. Indian Empire	1,615,560
9. Roumania	8,038,480	9. Belgian Congo	1,170,320
10. Australia	6,580,480	10. Australia	1,161,920
11. Chili	2,637,440	11. Chili	1,038,600
12. Belgian Congo	2,437,800	12. Roumania	710,820

The value of the exports from Belgium has continually increased since the creation of the Belgian kingdom. The average value of the country's exports for the decennial periods ending—

1840 was £128,189,040
1850 ,, £167,165,667
1860 ,, £350,657,405
1870 ,, £596,671,496
1880 ,, £1,097,993,658
1890 ,, £1,307,104,571
1900 ,, £1,568,704,379
1910 ,, £2,474,655,745

In 1912, as has been stated, it was £3,951,478,572.

Notwithstanding this continuous and great increase, the value of the imports exceeds that of the exports. In 1912 the value in excess of the imports

over that of the exports was £37,261,224. The more the figures relating to imports and exports are analysed, the clearer becomes the proof of the country's prosperity. A large quantity of the imports to Belgium consists of raw material, which, handled by skilled Belgian workmen, vastly increases the country's wealth. Belgium enriches herself by what she retains at home, as well as what she exports. Economists assert that, so rich is the country, her purchases abroad are made entirely from revenue.

The production of the coal mines and blast-furnaces of the country has increased by about four and a half million tons, yearly, in ten years, the average output being 25,768,650 tons. The output from the iron and steel works has more than tripled in the same period, the average now being 4,953,070 tons.

Relying on the returns relating to imports, exports, and population published by various Governments, Belgians assert their country's industry is greater than that of any other country in the world. The product of labour, as summarized by them is, per head, as follows : Belgium, £29 15*s.* 10*d.*; England, £20 10*s.* 0*d.*; Germany £10 10*s.* 10*d.*; France, £9 17*s.* 6*d.*; the United States, £6 10*s.* 10*d.*; Italy, £4 11*s.* 8*d.*; Austria-Hungary, £3 17*s.* 6*d.*; Japan, £1 8*s.* 0*d.*; Russia in Europe, £1 8*s.* 0*d.*; and Finland, £1 5*s.* 10*d.*

The money earned by Belgian industry is spread amongst many. There the number of employed increases in greater proportion than the number of employers or people working on their own account. Trusts have not proved terrific in Belgium,

and the only millionaire who has succeeded in obtaining control of an industry, M. Solvey, of soda fame, is more of a beneficent Liberal, with strongly marked Socialistic sympathies, than a grinding tyrant.

One of the most accurate of Sociologists is M. Waxweiler, Director of the Sociologist Institute founded by M. Solvey, and one of the most trusted advisers of King Albert, himself an eager inquirer, and a constant student of sociological problems. M. Waxweiler has calculated that in ten years the number of persons employed by others in Belgium increased by 250 per cent., and the number of employers by 100 per cent. There is thus, says M. Waxweiler, constituted a class, more and more numerous, of wage-earners, formed by men who can no longer hope to raise themselves normally to the rank of autonomous producers, and the divorce between the employer of hands who concentrates all industrial enterprise, and the workman who brings to it the collaboration of his daily labour is accentuated, in Belgium as in other countries, by the anonymous form taken by the association of capital, necessary for mechanical production, in limited liability companies.

A thousand limited liability companies employ between them more than half of the 700,000 workmen in Belgium.

The manner in which the wage-earning class was formed in Belgium is exemplified in the history of the mines. In them 130,000 workmen are engaged : the largest number employed in any one industry in the country. In the commencement, the miners themselves managed the mines. From the tenth

to the fourteenth century coal was extracted by groups of miners, organized in bands or companies. Those bands obtained from the landlords authorization to exploit specified portions of the subsoil. The members of the groups were the master-miners. They worked in the mines themselves, aided by their children, sometimes by workmen whom they paid. They sold the coal they extracted directly, and shared the profits. This *régime* still existed in 1830; but only in a small number of mines, for by degrees the working miners became separated from the employers, according as the more able and more economic bought out the others, and became their wage-paying masters instead of their profit-sharing partners, or as merchants interposed themselves between the consumers of coal and the workers of the mines. The merchants, who commenced by lending money at interest to the miners, became in the end the ruling powers in the mines, obtaining the concessions for their working from the landlords and engaging the miners as their wage-paid workmen. As long as the common working on the profit-sharing system continued the development of the mines was impeded by the absence of unity in the management, by the clashing of the individual interests of the miners, by the ignorance of the master-miners, who did not know how to read or write, and looked with suspicion on innovation, and by the lack of capital. The situation was not, however, greatly changed until the nineteenth century, when the introduction of steam-pumps opened the way to technical improvements. Then was recognized the desirability of sinking deeper the shafts, and of generalizing the use of machines for

the extraction of coal as well as for haulage, and of systemizing the working. The presence of the French army on the coast between 1803 and 1805 gave great impulsion to the coal trade. In the environs of Mons, capitalists having sunk new shafts, augmented the capital of existing societies and established new ones, and, in return, required a larger share than before in the decisions regarding management. Their action served to accentuate the separation between workers and management. With the increase of the output of the mines, brought about by the use of machinery and the development of the means of transit, the necessity of large capital and closely organized management grew. From year to year the old bands of working miners were bought out by new companies. To-day 97 per cent. of the miners are without shares in the profits, or voices in the management of the limited liability companies that own the mines they work in. Similar development took place in other industries. The new industries that sprung up in the country were all organized on the new lines. The statisticians declare that 400 of these new industries have been added to the 300 industries that flourished in Belgium in 1830. The additional workmen required for all the new enterprises were furnished in part by the increase of the population, in part by workers drawn from the fields. Besides the workers in mines and factories there remain 100,000 artisans who work in their own houses; these are hand-workers, the successors of those whose ranks were decimated by the famine in Flanders which followed the triumph of machinery in 1846.

In the change which has taken place in the conditions of labour in Belgium, M. Waxweiler sees the triumph of organization, and proof of its necessity, rather than that of capital. "The evolution of the mines," he says in his monograph on the industrial revolution in Belgium, "puts us in presence of the same primordial factor, and we can thus conclude that, veritably, that which has taken from the modern worker the disposition of the products of his labour is not capital, it is the necessity of the organization of production."

None have been more deeply impressed by the necessity of organization than the workers themselves. Left, each individual to himself, in the illusive freedom of the French Revolution, the members of the working classes found themselves ground beneath or threatened by a tyranny of wage-payers. In Belgium those who most successfully put in force the organization the success of which M. Waxweiler dwells upon, were men with whom money-making was the first consideration. These boasted liberal freedom from the tenets of Christianity. They spoke much of humanity, but they loved most the liberty which permitted them to secure the labour for unconscionable hours at unconscionable wages of weak women and children. These employers made rules for the interior of their factories as severe as the harshest regulations of an ancient guild; but they cried out in horror, in the sacred name of Liberty, against laws which might trammel employers by restricting the hours of labour, forbidding the employment of women and children where it was dangerous to their health, or regulating the rate of pay. It was to counteract their

policy of sweating that the Catholics founded their mixed unions of masters and men, and the Socialists their labour federations. The common, though not combined action of Catholics and Socialists has overcome the policy of *laissez-faire* of the Liberals, and secured a long series of social laws, which in Belgium, as elsewhere, have found their highest expression in the Employers' Liability Act.

The Belgians boast that they alone of continental peoples have full freedom of speech and organization. Belgian workmen have made good uses of that freedom. They have secured a notable advance in the rate of the wages, and made it possible for their societies to insist that all shall have a living wage. In the last fifty years wages have increased in every instance. In most instances they have doubled. In some industries they have tripled. Comfort has increased with wages; with lessened hours of work, and with the means of satisfying them new desires have come. The Standard of Life is elevated in a permanent manner, said Hector Dennis, the Socialist Professor and Deputy, "the worker is no longer chained to an inflexible minimum of enjoyments; he has contracted and he preserves the habitude of new luxuries." Between Liberal and Socialist theories, the Catholic Government of Belgium, which has passed all the social laws of the country, has hit on a middle course of Subsidized Liability, which, applied to the question of the Employers' Liability, is known as the Belgian System. The essence of this system according to its exponents is the union in local associations of citizens, separated in other things by education and interests, to make a

common fund of their savings and engage to help each other in case of illness, invalidity, and old age. The societies of insurance against illness, subsidized by the State, contain 400,000 members, collect and distribute funds equivalent to £200,000 in English money, including a Government grant of £16,000, and have twenty million francs (£800,000) in reserve. Such societies exist in nearly every commune in Belgium; 5,700 societies, containing a million members, nearly a seventh of the population of the country, are affiliated to the old age pension fund. The payments into these societies by members amount to ten million francs (£400,000) a year. The State adds to these six millions (£240,000) by way of subventions. In ten years the Government grants to the societies have amounted to fifty million francs (£2,000,000 sterling), and the reserve fund of the societies amounts to over 130 millions (£5,200,000).

Under the system of subsidized liability there are organized many other societies, those of life insurance, insurance against strikes, special insurances to meet the needs of those who emigrate for a few months every year, of those who reap harvests in France; and of those who have growing crops and cattle to be protected.

Most important of the Belgian societies are those formed for the acquisition of workmen's dwellings.

These societies have constructed 150,000 houses in twenty years. For their construction the Government savings bank has advanced eighty millions of francs (£3,200,000) to 42,000 workmen. Taking women and children into account, it is

calculated that in the twenty years the laws on workmen's dwellings have been in force a tenth of the population of Belgium has been newly housed in dwellings which eventually, on easy terms, become the property of those dwelling in them.

The return of the National Savings Bank gives the last touch to the picture of Belgian prosperity and providence. In this bank, which accepts only small sums, there is deposited 1,525,500,000 francs, (£61,020,000). The deposits run from one franc upwards. More than half the total of 1,132,795 depositors are depositors of small sums. Out of every hundred inhabitants of Belgium, there are thirty-five possessed of savings-bank accounts. The development of the foreign trade of the country is seen in the movement of the port of Antwerp. In 1863, the first year in which Antwerp was free from the Dutch tax the tonnage of vessels entering the port was 600,000 tons. In 1870 the tonnage was 1,327,000 tons. In 1894 it was over five million tons; in 1906 it exceeded ten million tons; in 1913, 7,056 vessels entered the port drawing 14,143,647 tons.

CHAPTER XII

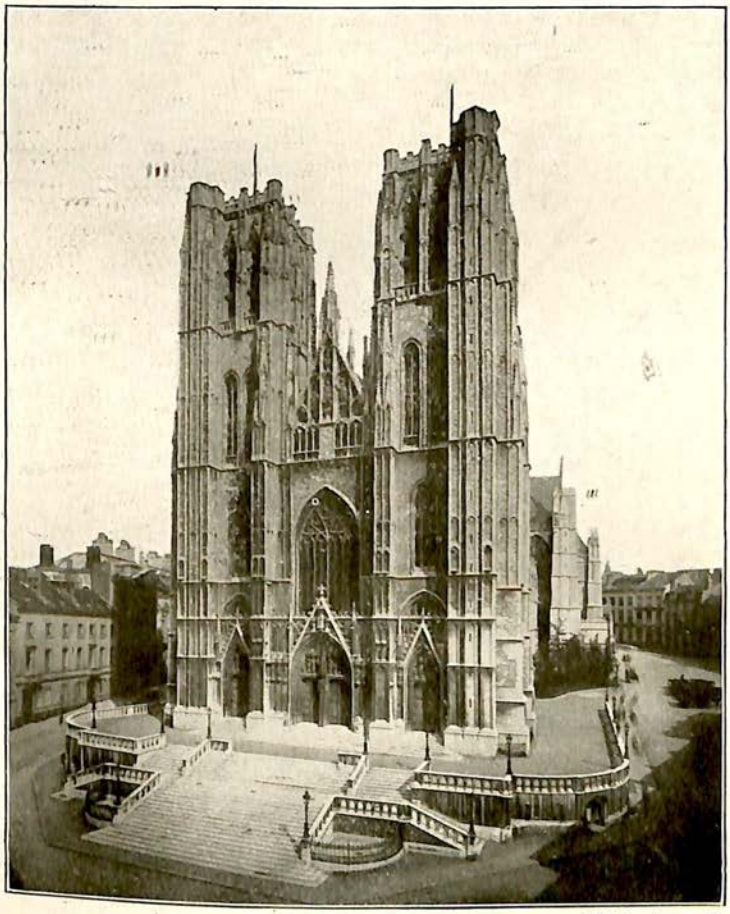
ART, LITERATURE, AND LANGUAGE

THE great cathedrals of Belgium, the earliest of which, erected on the site of older churches, date from the tenth century, and that country's famous halles show in their structure the national characteristics of the Belgians. The general plans of the cathedrals are, of course, similar to those of other Christian countries, and their decorations have much in common with those of the churches of neighbouring lands, France on the one hand, and Germany on the other. The characteristic notes lie in the general plan, in the combination of art and practicability. In Belgium great space combined with beauty was sought for, more than in other lands. In place of the narrow aisles and lofty vaults of the French cathedrals, vast spaces for worshipping congregations are found in Belgian cathedrals; as vast spaces for bartering merchants are found in the halles. In the cathedrals in Belgium the height of the nave is generally but twice the width, instead of three times as elsewhere. In Malines the manner in which space was gained is remarkable: the tower being so constructed that its lower portion forms part of the church, the eastern side, facing the high altar, being supported on an arch a hundred feet high. From the thirteenth century, the Gothic style,

then brought to perfection in France, prevailed in Belgian ecclesiastical architecture; the halles, in their intentions and proportions distinctly national buildings, and their great belfries, were also built in the Gothic style. The Gothic art as used in the embellishment of these buildings was distinctly national only in as much as the crowding, almost the overlading, of decoration exhibited the sumptuousness of the proud burghers who erected them.

The painter was at first the obedient follower of the sculptor, the paintings of the early masters being made more in conformity with the sculptor's models than with human life. The growth of the Belgian school of painting owed much to the City Guilds. The painters themselves had a Guild, that of St. Luke, which watched strictly over their work, seeing that all was honestly done, allowing nothing scamped to pass. The patronage of the Guilds especially fostered the art of portrait painting, innumerable altarpieces being painted for them, in which, kneeling at the feet of their patron saint, were depicted the donors.

Valuable as this patronage was, more valuable still was the patronage of the splendid dukes of Burgundy. At the moment that Flanders was annexed to Burgundy, there was born near Maestricht Jean Van Eyck, the great artist, who, with his brother, Hubert, revolutionized painting. Hubert Van Eyck was the first to apply the use of oil paints to the purpose of art. Jean Van Eyck was the father of landscape painting. Again, he and his brother were the first to throw off the yoke of the sculptor's model, and paint nature as she is. The minuteness of their realism is marvellous.



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BRUSSELS ; THE COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF ST. GUDULE

What the Van Eycks began was perfected in the next century by Memling, whose delightful works, preserved in the Hospital at Bruges, are without compare. The room in the hospital which contains, upon its walls, some half a dozen paintings by Memling, and has in its centre the shrine of Saint Ursula, its panels covered by Memling with pictures of the history of this saint and her companions, the eleven thousand virgins, is the most perfect museum in the world. In other museums pictures torn from church and home are crowded together in discord with each other, and with their surroundings. In Bruges, the hospital remains as it was in Memling's day in its outward appearance, in its order, cleanliness, and regularity, and in the generosity of the kindly nuns who manage it. The uniform of the patients is, in some details, the same as it was when Memling painted, and, though there is said to be no foundation for it in history, one likes to linger over the tale that when the painter was himself a patient in the hospital he painted the pictures preserved there in gratitude for the care he received, giving his own likeness to the face of the man, attired as a patient, who looks in through a window in one of the paintings.

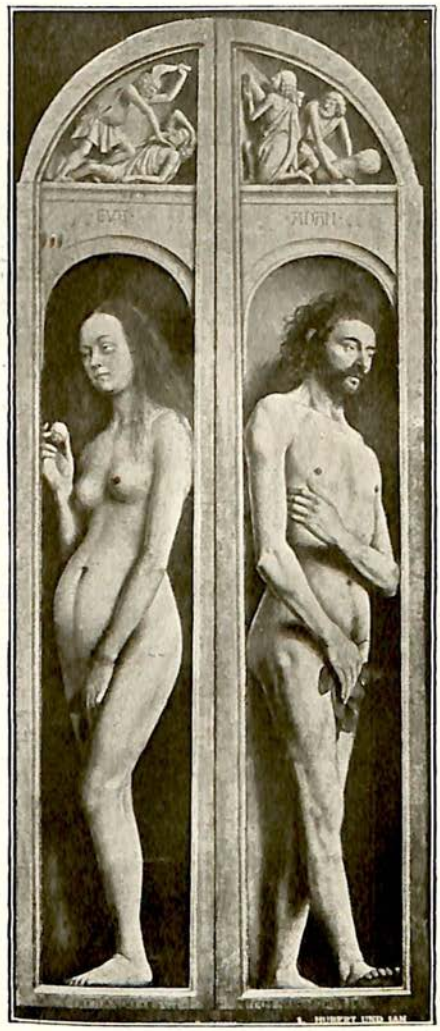
The number of Flemish painters who flourished under the Burgundian princes and their immediate successors was innumerable. When Margaret of Austria held her court at Malines a hundred and fifty painters lived in that town. In the sixteenth century, Antwerp became a centre of art. In 1497 Quentin Metsys settled there, he whom the inscription on his tombstone records was, "At one time a blacksmith, afterwards a famous painter."

These old masters painted life and scenery with absolute fidelity; they lived in a time when life was a mass of moving colour, when men as well as women went brilliantly attired. They were splendid colourists. Their deep religious feeling put poetry into the themes they touched on. Quentin Metsys was the last of these. After his time the spirit of the Italian renaissance swept over Belgium. Marble-columned palaces and balustraded-terraces replaced the Flemish backgrounds in the pictures of the Belgian painters; and the figures of the Belgian types, before faithfully reproduced, were replaced by imitations of Italian Venuses and Virgins.

Although the quaint simplicity of the older masters was lost, in almost every instance, and much with it, many of the painters of the renaissance period in Belgium who succeeded the old masters were excellent; and some were greater than the greatest who had gone before. Of the few who carried on the old tradition Peter Breughel was the chief. He studied in Italy, but remained true to Flemish types and landscapes, as in the scenes of Flemish life and winter landscapes, in the paintings intended to portray the arrival at Bethlehem and the massacre of the innocents.

Breughel was a master both of landscape painting and of the painting of flower pieces popular in his time. Breughel's two sons, and their sons after them, carried on into the seventeenth century the artistic tradition of their house.

In the most troublous times in Belgium, painting continued to flourish. The painting of the Duke d'Albe in the Brussels Museum by Sir Antonius



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ADAM AND EVE

(*By Hubert and Jean Van Eyck*)

Moro is one of the museum's greatest masterpieces. Antwerp remained a great centre of painting. About 1586 Peter Paul Rubens, a child of seven years of age, was brought there by his mother. Rubens was a pupil of the Jesuits, a diplomatist and ambassador as well as a painter. He studied in Italy, but painted as a Fleming, and one of his faults lay in his choice of coarse Flemish women for his models.

One even more of a Fleming in his outlook was Jacob Jordaens. Jordaens was a Lutheran. Adverse to the painting of religious subjects, or, possibly lacking commissions to paint them, he painted scenes of domestic life in Belgium. His most favourite subject was a Twelfth Night scene, "Le Roi boit." He was over true to reality in those paintings, he seldom refrained from reproducing repulsive incidents in them.

Jordaens painted scenes of Flemish life grossly upon great canvases. Teniers on small canvases did the like with wider imagination, and equal, if not greater, genius.

The eighteenth century produced no notable painters in Belgium. The opening of the next century found Belgium bound to France, in art as well as in politics. Painting in Belgium had become a pale reflection of French art, following its variations, noble and cold with the painters of the court, frivolous and gallant with the timid disciples of Watteau and Boucher, finally respectfully classic with David. The fall of the first Empire tightened instead of loosening ties which bound Belgium to French art. David found refuge in Brussels, and soon in that city there was a Belgian legion of

" Little Davids " laboriously copying his pseudo-classicism.

With the Belgian revolution a fever of independence seized the artists of the country. They turned from classicism to romanticism, and in their ardour went as far astray as they had been led before. Immense canvases were covered with paintings of heroic episodes of the revolution and other glorious periods of Belgian history. Men who might have done better wasted themselves in futile efforts to recreate the old Flemish school, producing genre pictures of cabarets and village dances, in the type of Teniers.

From the crowd of nonentities some painters stood forth. Henry Leys was one of those who sought to recreate the ancient time and, steeping himself in its atmosphere, he succeeded. " Leys," said Théophile Gautier, " is not an imitator, he is a resembler." Leys stood alone, the others were uninspired illustrators of civil and religious archæology. Their reconstructed scenes of the Middle Ages were peopled by phantoms. One only of the artists of this period escaped from the temptation of going backwards, Henri de Braekeleer, who in the opinion of his contemporaries stupidly painted the things that he saw. His genius was not recognized until the moment of his death. Apart from him, the Belgian school during at least half a century, according to a Belgian critic, merited only to be called the " Brabançonne." Under one form or another it was that famous air, officially consecrated as the national melody, that served the Belgian artists, no matter what subject they treated, or from what century they sought their

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THE LEGEND OF ST. ANNE

(*From the painting by Quentin Metsys*)

inspiration. "In looking at their work we always seem to hear a distinct murmur of bourgeois, chanting the song in our ears."

It was a strange aberration to think that in order to be able to paint like the masters of the older times it was sufficient to paint scenes and personages of the times of these great masters, or that great paintings could be reproduced by covering huge spaces, as the great masters had done in many instances. The aberration continued long. A painter named Wiertz, whose unbalanced mind hardly excused his impudence, deemed himself the continuator of Rubens; he introduced what he thought to be philosophy and humanitarianism into his paintings, and set up, nominally as a studio, a second-rate Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors, which he prevailed on the city of Brussels to purchase and keep for the attraction of deluded English tourists, who make pilgrimages to it to this day. It was not until the last quarter of the nineteenth century that the Belgian painters freed themselves from the Brabançonne. It was by way of realism, learned in France, that the affranchisement came. Millet and his companions had restored to nature what the constructors of pictures had for a long time deprived her of. The studio with its arranged lights was abandoned for nature, and man was allowed to take his place in the picture just as he was, without its being considered necessary to give him the attitude and the costumes of a theatre. In Belgium, Fourmois first, somewhat timidly, opened the way to landscape freely painted, returning to the great traditions of the old Flemish masters, while Charles de Groux, following the

example of Courbet and of Millet, but without imitating them, and guided by his own feelings, introduced into art the odyssey of the miserable, the sufferings of the humble folks. This was the real renaissance of Belgian art. The characteristic art of to-day may be said to be the faithful reproduction of real things, not only in their form and character, but also in their atmosphere; the sentiment of fresh air substituted for the fictitious light of the studio; the exact notation of life; the sincere study of nature.

Little schools of fantastic ideas, from symbolism to cubism, exist in Belgium, but Belgian art as a whole is less given to extravagance, and is possibly more sincere than that of France.

The number of students at the Royal Academy of Painting in Antwerp at the present time averages something about two thousand, while the number of students in other art academies and drawing schools in the country number over sixteen thousand.

The early history of sculpture in Belgium resembles that of painting, save that in Belgium there were no sculptors so great as the greatest of Belgian painters. In recent years with the rise of the school of realism there arose sculptors entitled, at least, to be placed in the first rank with their contemporaries of other countries. Of those Jef Lambeau, an unlettered genius, might have been said to have been a reincarnation of Jordaens and Constantin Meuncer, a modern Breughel, were it not that while true in all things else to life, the labourers he modelled were without the least glimmer of illuminating hope.

The foundation of the Belgian literature was laid

by Charlemagne. "In the ninth century," says Pirenne, "clerics commenced to occupy themselves with the cultivation of letters, and the Emperor charged himself with furnishing masters for them. In almost all the convents of the country there lived learned Irish and Anglo-Saxon monks charged with teaching good Latin metre and writing to the novices. Women's abbeys did not rest strangers to the movement. At Maesyck the Saints Harmindis and Renuma occupied their leisure on work of embroidery and patiently illuminating beautiful manuscripts. On all sides libraries were formed, annals were written and the lives of saints were edited. The shapeless recitals of the Merovingian hagiographers were given form."[1] The Low Countries, where monasteries were numerous, and where foreign masters crowded, became an active centre for literary and artistic life. The Irishman, Sedulius, was the oracle of the literary circle which formed around the bishop of Liége, Hartjar, in the chambers decorated with pantings and stained glass of the episcopal palace. At the other extremity of the country the school of Saint Armand, directed by Hucbald, whose renown as a poet, historian, and musician spread through the whole of the west, acquired such celebrity that Charles the Bold confided to it the education of his sons.

In the intellectual life of Belgium, as in politic life, Celtic and Germanic interests crossed and merged themselves into one another. From the Carlovingian epoch there were found in the Church and in the higher classes of society great numbers of people to whom Romance and Germanic dialects

[1] Pirenne, *Histoire de la Belgique*, Vol. I. pp. 32, 33.

were equally familiar. In the abbeys Flemish and Walloon monks lived side by side, and there has been found in the Monastery of St. Armand, copied by the same hand in the ninth century, the most ancient poem in French literature, *La Chanson de Sainte Eulalie*, and one of the oldest monuments of German literature, the *Luewigislied*. At Liége the Bishop Hartjar was boasted of by Sedulius for his knowledge of three languages.[1]

The co-existence of two idioms in the Southern Low Countries was due to the composite character of these countries. Usage of the Roman dialect in the Germanic parts of Belgium was introduced not as amongst the Anglo-Saxons, for example, by conquest and violence. The knowledge of French spread to the north of the linguistic frontier because the influence of French civilization made itself felt there at an early moment. Until the twelfth century it remained the exclusive privilege of the upper classes of society. French became a second national language in Flanders for the higher clergy and the aristocracy, but it exercised no influence on the language or the people, which remained purely Germanic. There was not, as in England, an infiltration or reciprocal absorption of the dialects. From the reign of Otho I to the twelfth century, Germanic influence was greatest upon Belgian literature; the Imperial Church was the instrument of the intellectual culture of the clergy of Lotharingia. The first Saxon bishop of Liége, Ebrachar, was the founder, or at least the restorer of the cathedral school, which under

[1] *Sedulii Scoti carmina*, edited by L. Traube, Mon. Germ. Hist., "Poetae latini Aevi Carolini," Vol. III. p. 167.

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"LE ROI BOIT"

(*From the painting by Jordaens*)

Notgar became the most ardent scientific and literary centre in the Empire. In the cathedral schools and the monasteries of the Imperial epoch there was already shown the pronounced taste for history which since then has always remained dominant in Belgium.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries French influence dominated the literary and artistic life of the Low Countries, as it did their political life. In Flanders French was no longer the monopoly of the nobility; it spread amongst the bourgeois. The rich citizens who copied the luxury and the manners of the knights copied also their language. Moreover, the necessities of commerce influenced the spread of French. Knowledge of French was necessary for commerce, not only with France, but with England, which country, it will be remembered, was then a French-speaking land. As the Lombard and Florentine bankers transacting business in Flanders made use of no language but French to carry on their commercial transactions, the woollen and cloth merchants found themselves obliged to acquire a knowledge of that language. French literature advanced naturally in the Germanic portion of the Low Countries on the footsteps of the French language. It did not come to Flanders as a foreign import. It spread, rather, from the Walloon territories of Flanders and Brabant. In the rich communes of the basin of the Scheldt, Arras, Douai, Lille, Cambrai, Tournai, Valencienne, there abounded poets, chroniclers, and translators.

The literary activity of the writers in the French language was so great and so fruitful in Flanders,

Hainaut, and Brabant to the end of the twelfth century that it retarded the development of literature in the Germanic tongue. For a long time the Flemish writers contented themselves with the modest rôles of translators or remodellers.

In the fifteenth century, when the Low Countries were erected into a separate State under the rule of Burgundy, a stronger national note was struck in literature. French influence lessened, but the French language did not disappear from the Flemish districts; it continued to be spoken at the Court of the princes, by the nobility and the rich bourgeois who continued to send their children to learn French in the Walloon towns. The entourage of the Burgundian Princes considered Flemish a barbarous dialect. Nevertheless they learned it. Philippe le Bon and Charles le Téméraire both spoke Flemish. They purchased Flemish manuscripts for their libraries, and Charles granted a pension to the Flemish rhetorician Deroèvere. The Princes of the House of Burgundy did nothing to hinder the usage of the Flemish language in the Low Countries, or of Flemish literature. They knew well that their power was as much Flemish as Walloon.[1]

Froissart, a Walloon, knew Flemish. Jacquemin Maerlant, the Flemish poet, raised Flemish to the dignity of a literary language, and thenceforward the Flemish people found in it their literary alimentation. In these times, simple artisans possessed manuscripts of the most famous Flemish works.

[1] "Estoit plus Flamand que Wallon." Molinet Fredericq, *Essai sur la rôle politique et sociale des Ducs de Bourgogne dans le Pays Bas*, p. 74.

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A VILLAGE DANCE

(*From the painting by Teniers*)

Flemish literature of those centuries owed much to the religious feeling and the mysticism of the people. Jean Ruysbroeck was the father of Flemish prose. The depth of his inspiration and the beauty of his language set him high on the roll of authors of his time. While mysticism developed in the north, the profane writers of the Flemish language in the south of the Low Countries opened a new vein. In the commencement of the fifteenth century there appeared for the first time in Flanders and Brabant the Chambers of Rhetoric which spread throughout the whole of the southern country, and exercised a preponderating influence on the literature of the Low Countries. These Chambers owed their origin to the religious associations which aided the clergy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in the representation of mystery plays. They were gradually transformed in the commencement of the Burgundian epoch into literary societies in which a bourgeois character dominated. Favourized by the diffusion of instruction in the centres of urban populations, they cultivated more zealously, with more good will than taste or originality, the art of writing, or, to speak more strictly, rhetorizing in verse. From their origin they preserved a moralizing tendency which expressed itself, above all, in the theatre. It is from the epoch of the Chambers of Rhetoric that dates the vigorous development of the dramatic literature of the Low Countries. The towns paid the cost of the spectacles given to the public, and rivalled each other for the possession of the richest and longest mystery plays. Brussels with her Seven Joys of Mary, which were repre-

sented successively during a cycle of seven years, from about 1444, could boast of having attained to the highest degree in the competition. The riches of the country enabled the mysteries to be presented with splendour, and it seems possible that their staging exercised influence on the painting of the period.[1]

The love of theatrical representation was as great in the Walloon towns as in those of Flanders. Rhetoricians flourished on each side of the linguistic frontier. While the theatrical representations in each language were similar there was little similarity in the literature. There was as great a contrast as could be imagined between Ruysbroeck and Jean le Bel and Froissart; while the great Flemish prose author wrote his mystic treaties for the pious bourgeois, it was for the nobility that the Walloon historians Jean le Bel and Froissart compiled their chronicles. Le Bel, a native of Liége, was attached to the House of Beaumont, and had no other ideas than those of the feudal life, which he developed so brilliantly in Hainault. Under Jean de Beaumont he fought for Edward III against the Scotch. The growing independence of the Low Countries is traceable in the work of Le Bel. He wrote in French, but not as a Frenchman. His hero was "the noble King Edward." He neither imitated nor copied the French writers, he remained himself, and was the first of a long series of writers who gave to the Low Countries a school which rivalled that of France itself.

Froissart was a disciple and to a certain extent the continuator of Le Bel. A protégé of Philippe

[1] Pirenne, Vol. II. p. 454.

of Hainault, his sympathy was at first entirely with England, but in his finished work he was impartial. Froissart pleased all the world because he wrote without national prejudice. The writers who succeeded him in the following centuries were partisans of Burgundy. As the power of Burgundy grew in face of France there also grew in the Low Countries in the face of the literature of France a rival literature in the same tongue.

The Renaissance movement did not come directly to the Low Countries as it did to France and Germany. The influence of Italy was felt less in Belgium than elsewhere, and the revival in Belgium was in its inception a national movement. When it commenced French literature was dead in the Low Countries; and Flemish, almost entirely relegated to the Chambers of Rhetoric, had become banal. For Erasmus and his followers Latin, the universal language, was the only language worthy of being used. It was not a mere renaissance of letters, it was a renaissance of man that Erasmus strove for. Success seemed near to him when the outbreak of the revolution drove him to refuge in Bâle.

About 1473 Mertens at Alost, and Jean Veldener at Louvain, introduced the art of printing into Belgium. Presses were specially set up in twenty Belgian towns. Towards the end of the reign of Charles V the country was filled with printing offices. In Antwerp alone there were thirty-five, but with the spread of printing there came no revival of literary activity. The Belgians were content to reprint and read the works of French authors. In the country of Froissart and Le Bel,

of Chastellain and Commines, there was no longer a French literature; and the religious troubles and the long torpor which followed them left Belgium without a French literature from that time until the nineteenth century.[1]

In the intervening centuries in Belgium the language of the Flemish became a patois, while the language of their brothers on the other side of the Scheldt was polished and ennobled.

Up to the eighteenth century the friendship between Flemish and Walloons continued unimpaired. The first break in that friendship, between those who were, in truth, more closely united than brothers, was caused by the French Revolution. The leaders of public opinion in Belgium were Grand Seigneurs, descendants of Marnix and his companions; who had nothing and could have nothing in common with the *sans culottes* of France. The people in Belgium had no sympathy with the volunteers of 1792. The help that France gave Belgium at the moment of the revolution of 1830 was little thanked for in the Flemish provinces; King William in wishing to impose the Dutch language on his Belgian subjects advanced as far as a sovereign could in discrowning himself. The Flemish could not understand the language of the Dutch magistrates and other officials placed over them, and these officials could not understand or would not listen to the patois of the Flemish. Of the petitions which were presented to the Parliament of the Netherlands more than three-quarters were signed by Flemish peasants who spoke this patois, petitioning against what was

[1] Pirenne, *op. cit.*, Vol. III. p. 315.

in reality the Flemish language, for amongst the educated classes of both countries the spoken and written Dutch and Flemish remained identical.

The Belgian Revolution produced no immediate literary results in the country; no law of copyright existed then in Belgium, and few Belgian authors' works were printed, though the printing presses of the country were never so busy in any period as they were in the period immediately following the erection of the Belgian Kingdom, printing the works of French authors.

It was not until 1834 that the movement took place in the country for the revival of Flemish. In 1844 Jan Frans Willems, the author of *Reimaert Vos*, presided over a meeting of members of newly constituted Chambers of Rhetoric, and some schoolmasters who had the courage and the ability to revive the literary language of Flanders. The movement proved speedily successful. The year following its inauguration the Belgian Government decreed the publication of the ancient Flemish texts of the country.

Willems was a Freethinker, but marching at the same moment towards the same end was a clergyman, the Abbé David. Each of these leaders of the Flemish literary renaissance founded a society. From that time to now there is a Willems fund and a Davids fund, which do good work. Willems died almost at the moment that the work he initiated commenced to flourish; his work was continued by Henri Conscience, a romancer of the school of Alexandre Dumas and Walter Scott.

We may smile to-day at Conscience's naïve tales, but they were valuable at the moment they were

written. They aroused the interest of the Flemish, and it is true to say that in his book *The Lion of Flanders* (*De Leeuw van Vlanderen*) Conscience retaught his countrymen to read. From the moment that book was published, to this, letters have flourished in Belgium. There is noble emulation between those who write in French and those who write in Flemish. The ignorant pretend that the Belgians do not read. The pretension is absurd. The number of publications in the country is extraordinary, and extraordinary is the high standard of ability. The Belgian Reviews equal those of France and Holland.

There are great authors who write in French to-day. The land which produced Ruysbroeck the Admirable, produced also Verlaine, and in our days produced Emile Verhaeren, a poet of daring flight, of happy moods, master of high thoughts, user of great words, whose nobility the people, King, and Government have joined in recognizing; and Maeterlinck, whose genius the whole world recognizes.

Maeterlinck lives outside of Belgium. He has borrowed from Ruysbroeck, he has borrowed from others, phrasing so skilfully he makes it seem he has touched nothing he has not ornamented. Belgium is famous for the number of its learned societies, historical, archæological, and scientific. These societies publish journals, the contributions to which are of great merit. The Belgian Academy, modelled on that of France, does good work. As has been told, the love of history preponderates in Belgium. To-day Henri Pirenne and Godefroi Kurth are continuators of the tradition of Froissart and Commines.

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HENRY CARTON DE WIART, MINISTER OF JUSTICE

In England great statesmen have been successful novelists; in Belgium at this moment there is one who is also a famous novelist. In chiselled words, in the atmosphere of life he gives to all he writes of, in the nobility of his thoughts set on paper, Henry Carton de Wiart, Minister of Justice, author of the *Cité Ardente*, is excelled by none.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BELGIAN PARLIAMENT

(1831–1857)

DURING the first ten years of the reign of Leopold I the Belgian Cabinets contained members of each of the parties which had united to win their country's independence.

Moderation had not deserted the Belgians in the midst of revolution. It had been paramount in the National Congress. It was to be paramount in the succeeding Parliament. The trading class is ever the most nervous in a community. To allay the apprehensions of that class the urban electorate was formed on the basis of a high monetary qualification. As a result, in the very towns in which the revolutionary fever had been strongest, solid citizens, rather than brilliant leaders of revolt, were chosen as deputies.[1] Place-holders were not dis-

[1] No man had done more for the revolution than Charles Rogier. In his newspapers he had formed public opinion in Liége. It was he who recruited and led the Liége contingent in the revolution. Yet, at the first election, in August 1831, his candidature for the Chamber was unsuccessful in that city. He sat in the first Belgian Parliament as a deputy for Thourout, in which agricultural constituency his election was secured by the influence of his Catholic colleague of the Provisionary Government, Count Félix de Mérode. On his defeat at Liége one of his friends, Van der Meer, wrote: "Consolez-vous, car

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CHARLES ROGIER

qualified from sitting in Parliament. Comparatively large numbers of them were elected to it. These formed a solid support for the Ministry. Such opposition as there was made up in malevolence for what it lacked in power. Its most noisy members were partisans of a republican form of government who were determined to see nothing good in a monarchical *régime*, and treated as treachery every concession made to diplomatic necessity. Distrustful of each other, and unorganized, the members of the opposition were unable to alter, scarcely able to retard the course of the legislation of the coalition Cabinet, but the bitterness of their attacks drove more than one Minister from office before they themselves disappeared.

Partisans of the Orange cause joined with the Republicans in continuous opposition to the Government in the first Parliament of King Leopold I. The attempts of this faction at counter revolution were piteous failures, but the faction remained considerable, and in the first years of his reign found opportunities in and out of Parliament of embarrassing and insulting the King.

The Belgian nobility is Catholic, but it cannot be accused of religious fanaticism; neither can it, as a class, be applauded for political zeal. There are great families in Belgium whose ancestors fought in the crusades, and whose names figure on the most glorious records of chivalry, but

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la loi électorale est bien vicieuse, les électeurs à 70 florins ne sont pas les hommes de la révolution, ce sont des hommes à intérêts matériels."—Discailles, *Charles Rogier*, Vol. II. p. 177.

such families are not numerous. The majority of the Belgian nobles bear titles of recent creation. An invisible barrier, cleared easily by gold, separates the upper bourgeoisie from them, but the education and aims of each class are similar. There are few landed proprietors in Belgium with wide territorial influence. The Belgian Constitution recognizes no privilege of nobility: nobles entering into political life do so on equal terms with the representatives of the commercial classes who were their schoolfellows, and are their neighbours. Although many titled men have always been found in the Belgian Chamber, there never was a Noble Party in it, or a Landed Proprietors' Party. When the Belgian Court was formed men of rank naturally obtained positions at it, and democrats, who found their onrush hindered by the dilatory prudence of the King, cried out that the nobles and the clergy used occult influence against them. They were wrong. King Leopold I exercised his power unswayed by the open or secret influence of any class or party.

The royal power was early manifested. Framers of the Belgian Constitution, who thought they had made a place for a puppet, found with astonishment that in matters of prime importance the King was supreme. In all its actions, home and foreign, the Parliamentary Government of Belgium proved a success: the greatest success in the Belgian Parliament was that of the Sovereign.

King Leopold's tact was exercised to the utmost in keeping all parties within the bounds of reason during the vexatious period between 1831 and 1839,

when sacrifice after sacrifice was made, with little seeming effect, to obtain peace with Holland. The acceptance of the Treaty of Eighteen Articles, of June 1831, that of the Treaty of Twenty-five Articles, in the following October, the siege of Antwerp, and the armed intervention of England and France, were successively signalled as the end of the differences with Holland. Instead of peace each had brought fresh threats, and fresh sheaves of diplomatic notes. The disastrous conflict between the Dutch and Belgian forces at Louvain, immediately after King Leopold's enthronement, when French aid alone saved Belgium, left bitter feelings in the minds of all. The Ministers who had recourse again to French aid when the Dutch once more marched on Belgium, in November 1832, were accused by fanatics and over-excited patriots in the Chamber of being traitors and parricides. Whilst the guns thundered at Antwerp a Ministerial crisis arose. King Leopold prevailed on the Ministers to withdraw their resignation, but their enemies were not disarmed, and, in April 1833, defeat on the War Budget brought a second tender of resignation. For a second time the Ministers were prevailed on by the King to remain in office, and Parliament was dissolved. At the General Elections which followed the Government gained some advantage. Its administration was able. Notwithstanding the storm and stress of the time it carried important measures, chief amongst which was the law for the construction of State Railways, the first railways built on the continent of Europe. In 1834 internal dissension in the Cabinet led to the resig-

nation of its Liberal chiefs, Rogier and Le Beau. At the moment of their resignation these statesmen preserved silence as to its cause, but it soon became evident that they had resigned because the King would not dismiss the Minister for War, whom they accused of lending too ready an ear to the recommendations of their political opponents. On the withdrawal of these Ministers a new Cabinet was formed which declared itself faithful to the principles of coalition, but already an exclusive policy was decided on by the Liberals.

Debates on the action of Church and State with regard to education marked the parliamentary sessions of 1839 and 1840. "The attitude of the Liberals became more than militant," says M. Hymans in his life of Frère Orban. "Attenuation of language was renounced, the adversary was openly confronted, the Liberal press supported the effort. The situation of a coalition Cabinet became impossible in the middle of acrimonious and repeated conflicts." [1]

In April 1840 the Ministry fell on a side issue. Its Catholic chief, M. de Theux, had in vain sought to conciliate the Liberals by allowing their representatives in the Cabinet a monopoly of patronage, so great that Liberal opinion became preponderating at the Bar, in the Magistrature, and in the Government Offices.[2]

[1] Hymans, *Frère Orban*, I. 54.

[2] Ce résultat s'était produit d'autant plus facilement que les Ministères de la Justice et des Finances appartiennaient tous deux à l'opinion libérale.—Devaux, *Revue Nationale*, 1840, II. pp. 287, 288.

The members of the new Ministry formed in 1840 were all Liberals. They announced their determination to uphold the policy of coalition, but their actions did not bear out their words. At the end of February 1841 the Catholics reproached the Government for being a government of irritation, which by misuse of the public funds sought to ruin private schools. This time it was open war. In replying to the attacks of the Catholics Rogier declared the Government would stand or fall by the vote of the Chamber on his Budget of Public Works. The vote took place on the 3rd of March, 1841. In the Chamber the Government was successful, having forty-nine votes against thirty-nine, but in the Senate it was defeated. That body adopted an address to the King in which it declared the Belgian nation was established by the union of men of divergent opinions, united for a common end, the maintenance of which union could alone secure the development of the numerous elements of prosperity which the kingdom possessed, and guarantee to Belgium her political existence. "It is impossible," said the address, "for Parliament to occupy itself with the real needs of the nation when parties draw away from each other instead of joining together. Such a situation hinders the regular march of administration and injures the dearest interests of Belgium. It is this situation the Senate is bound to consider. An essentially moderating power, its efforts should tend to conciliate opinions in the general interest. The Senate is convinced that whatever the means your Majesty considers

it right to employ to crush the fatal divisions, wise and moderate men will rally to them."

When this address was carried, the Ministers appealed to the King, first, to dissolve the Chamber, then, to dissolve the Senate.

King Leopold refused each request.[1] Adhering to the policy of maintaining a mixed Government, he entrusted the formation of a new Cabinet to M. Nothomb, a Catholic. The Cabinet formed by this statesman held office for four years and carried, almost unanimously, through the Chamber a measure of Primary Education settling for many years the most difficult question in Belgium.[2] The Education Bill, against which but three members voted in the Chamber, was carried unanimously through the Senate, and King Leopold manifested his approval of it in a letter of warm congratulation addressed to the Premier on the day his signature made it law. The law thus established permitted the subsidizing of education in public and private institutions; and provided for instruction in religion

[1] The Liberals accused the King of acting unjustly at this juncture. "Nous pensons que le roi a commis en ce temps-là une faute qui ressemble singulièrement à une injustice. Toute faute se paye. Il avait raison, l'ami qui, le 5 juillet 1845, lors de la crise un moment très grave, qui suivit la chute définitive des ministères mixtes, écrivant à Rogier dit: 'Le roi expie 1841.'"—Discailles, *Charles Rogier*, III. p. 57.

[2] The Belgian education law to which the text refers seemed perfect, and worked well for many years; but in Belgium there are two great parties, one intensely Catholic, the other rabidly atheistical, each honest, but holding irreconcilable views on the subject of education. Atheism did not wholly dominate the liberal party when the education law was enacted. In following chapters and in the Appendix the efforts made to frame fair laws of education are told.

and morals by ministers of religion, at the same time authorizing parents to decide whether their children should receive such instruction or not.

Partial victories gained at the elections in 1845 by the Liberals led to the retreat of M. Nothomb. On his retirement the King caused approaches to be made to Charles Rogier, by that time recognized leader of the Liberals. Rogier let it be known he would undertake the task of forming a Government if he were given the power to dissolve Parliament when it seemed opportune to him. King Leopold would not listen to such a proposal, and Devaux was summoned from London to preside over the Cabinet. His Ministry lasted only a few months, at the end of which King Leopold again found himself obliged to consult Rogier. This time the Liberal leader was summoned directly to the King, to whom he submitted a programme on the acceptance of which he was prepared to take office. On that programme there again figured the right of dissolving the Parliament when such action seemed necessary to the Prime Minister. Again King Leopold refused to surrender his prerogative or to bind himself to exercise it whenever the Prime Minister thought fit to request him to do so; and M. de Theux was once more entrusted with the task of forming a Ministry. This Ministry, composed exclusively of Catholics, pursued the moderate course of its predecessors. It continued in office until 1847, when fresh Liberal victories at last enabled Rogier to accept the Premiership without conditions regarding dissolution.

The Cabinet of M. de Theux resigned on the 1st

of July, 1847. It was not until the 12th of the following August that the succeeding Ministry was formed. The delay in the transference of power was caused by the King, who absented himself in London and Paris for two months. During that time King Leopold seized every opportunity that arose of reciting to those whom he was about to name his Ministers the great part he had played in the making of the Belgian State, and of emphasizing his necessity to Belgium. On the 8th of July, 1847, he wrote to Rogier: "The country here is poor in political ideas, and seems often disposed to lose sight of the basis on which its political existence reposes as a *European State.* It appears desirable to me to enlighten it on that question. There exist two sorts of States: the first exist by their *proper force;* the second because of certain conditions which are found in the convenience of Great States, and of the end which the great European family desires to see them attain to and fill.

"Belgium belongs to the second category. It has been *very difficult* for her to *find her place;* but I believe I do not flatter myself too much in saying that the position I have created for her is a fine one, and passes by far her greatest expectations in 1830; nothing must be done to lose it." [1]

On the 30th of July, Firmin Rogier, newly appointed Belgian Minister to France, wrote to his brother Charles from Paris describing an interview there with King Leopold. "His Majesty the King received me at the Tuileries. When I

[1] Discailles, *Charles Rogier,* III. p. 164.

entered into his cabinet he took a chair, and, like Augustus, he said to me: 'Take a chair, Cinna.' A necessary precaution, for the interview did not last less than an hour. Seated facing his Majesty I commenced by giving him some details, which he asked me for, of what you are doing, of what you hope, and of the men you count on joining you. My august interlocutor took up the word in his turn and kept it for a good half-hour. He spoke to me of Belgium, and of the fine position he had made for her in Europe, of the calm and prosperity she enjoyed, above all, in comparison with the other States of Europe. 'That position must not be spoiled,' he added. 'We must not be complaining constantly. We must not pass for a people always discontented and shifting. Europe, which has permitted us to constitute our nationality, which allows us to enjoy in peace the most democratic constitution in the world—Europe, if we come to trouble her again, may rouse herself at last, and partition our territories, which more than one regrets not having done at first.'

"The King then spoke to me of the fine position he had in England when he quitted it to come to Belgium, a position which would be 'magnificent' to-day, for he would direct the affairs of that country. He exercised the greatest influence on everything there. Moreover, he regarded his dynasty as the sole guarantee of Belgian Nationality and Independence."

King Leopold's fears for the stability of the monarchical *régime* in Belgium were revealed by his insistence on his indispensability to the country.

Evidence of these fears abounded also in his correspondence with Louis Philippe, to whom he wrote: "Sound judgment, moreover, is not our brilliant quality. Incessantly, one has to ask how such conclusions could possibly be drawn from given premises. Hitherto royalty has been the rock on which the political existence of the country rested; after fifteen years many folk have not arrived at a notion of that."

King Leopold did not fear the Radical leaders in the Chamber. He told Firmin Rogier that if Charles Rogier did not succeed in forming a Cabinet he would not be afraid to allow certain members of the Extreme Left to form one, as he was persuaded that once in power these advanced men would become less dangerous than they would be out of power, seeking to dominate and humiliate the Government. What the King feared was the outside action of the political clubs and Masonic Lodges of the Liberals. In common with Louis Philippe he regarded all such associations as hotbeds of Jacobinism. In June 1846 a Congress of Liberals, summoned by these bodies, was held in Brussels. Of it Louis Philippe wrote: "It reminds me of nothing less than the Commune of Paris of 1792 dictating from the Hôtel de Ville to the National Convention at the Tuileries all that it pleased to impose." The Congress did not dictate the erection of a Republic, but it dictated the adoption by the Liberal representatives of an anti-Catholic policy. Its first resolution required "Real Independence of Civil Power." Its third resolution demanded "the organization of Public

Instruction in all degrees, under the exclusive direction of Civil Authorities, in giving these the constitutional means of sustaining competition with private establishments, and repelling the authorized intervention of ministers of religion in the instruction organized by the Civil Power." Up to this time the Catholics had nourished the belief that the policy of coalition and moderation would be persevered in. They had no political organization to oppose the Masonic Lodges and Liberal Clubs. The activity of these bodies, stimulated by the success of the French Liberals, and the overthrow of the July Monarchy, secured Liberal victories at the polls. As far as the throne was concerned, the revolutionary storm which rose in France was dissipated at the Belgian frontier: "Here, thank God, I do not quite see what more could be desired," wrote King Leopold a few days after the fall of Louis Philippe. "We are to such an extent Liberalized that, with the exception of Universal Suffrage, I do not know what could be done in the way of novelty."

Notwithstanding the revolutionary ardour of the moment, the Belgian Liberals were very far from welcoming the oncome of the proletariat. The Liberal Government proposed the reduction of the monetary qualification of voters to twenty florins, the minimum fixed by the Constitution "as a safety valve opened to the too great expansion of the public, over-excited by events." On the day after the introduction of this measure Frère Orban, future leader of the Liberals, already a Cabinet Minister, wrote to a friend: "Yesterday a grave

resolution was taken and passed; on the advice of Delfosse and with the applause of the Right we proposed the lessening of the electoral qualification to the minimum fixed by the Constitution. We will examine the other reforms to be proposed; this is to remove all pretext to the Advanced." [1]

After the elections of 1848 the Liberals were masters of the Chamber, in which they had eighty deputies against thirty-five Catholics. From this time the power of the crown was continually exercised by King Leopold for the restraint of the majority. "Believing always in the necessity of the union of parties," says Juste, "but being deluded, it appeared to us, as to the durability of that alliance, he applied himself to removing as much as possible, every irritating question from the political arena. In this connection he was far from sparing his advice and recommendations." A question which was destined to excite great emotion some years later in the country occupied the King at this moment. It was that of beneficence: "We should not counteract the wishes of donors and public benefactors, except for important reasons," he wrote to the Minister of Justice.[2] The Liberals were determined to strike at the Catholics' foundations by enacting statutes of mortmain. For the moment the King restrained them. Coalition between Liberals and Catholics had ceased, but the King's influence succeeded in preserving an armistice until 1857. The delay in the outbreak of party warfare in the Chamber was also due, in

[1] Hymans, *Frère Orban*, Vol. I. p. 207.
[2] Juste, *Léopold I et Léopold II*, p. 251.

part, to the action of the Catholics, who clung to the belief that the differences between politicians, ardent for the country's welfare, were not radical. King Leopold long retained what his biographer called "his delusion regarding the durability of the union of parties." The Catholics were gradually undeceived. In November 1851 Frère Orban, replying to Descamps in the Chamber, said: "The honourable member has finished by gradually perceiving that it is not a question of a simple misunderstanding between the Liberals and the Catholics, but of a difference very serious, very profound, very radical." "That is true," replied Descamps.

In fact, the efforts of the Liberal Government principally tended towards the secularization of three things in which the Catholics held that the influence of the Church should preponderate: Education, Charity, and Religious Temporalities.

In 1857 the Catholic Ministry then in power introduced a Charitable Bequest Bill. It was proposed in this Bill to allow testators to found charitable institutions and appoint trustees to administer them subject to the royal authorization given on the advice of the Charitable Board; and to legalize bequests to existing institutions, with the proviso that such institutions should possess no properties other than those actually occupied by them. This measure affirmed the ancient jurisprudence of Belgium and protected the right of testators, while setting up protection, non-existent before, against mortmain, on the danger of which the Liberals insisted. Notwithstanding the clauses

intended to disarm opposition the Bill was violently attacked. The debates on it lasted during twenty-seven sittings of the Chamber, in which the Opposition displayed heat calculated to arouse the passions of the mob. It was baptized the Law of the Convents. "The privilege established," cried Frère Orban, "you will have given to the country a legal rallying cry, legitimate, unanimous, invincible; 'Down with the Convents!'"[1] On the 27th of May the Chamber, by 60 votes against 41, passed the three first clauses of the Bill. These clauses contained its fundamental principles. Their passing was a signal for tumult. Crowds which filled the streets at the rising of the House, groaned at the Catholics, cheered the Liberals, and insulted the Papal Nuncio. On the morrow the manifestations took a character still more grave, and the agitation gained the provinces.[2]

At nine o'clock in the evening of the 28th the King, who came from his château at Laeken to Brussels to preside at the Cabinet Council, was the object of a warm ovation, but the people's acclamations did not dissipate his profound displeasure. He was irritated and humiliated to see the good reputation of Belgium compromised abroad. The Council being assembled he expressed the opinion that it was necessary to arrive at the re-establishment of order without delay, even if recourse had to be had to martial law. He declared:

[1] Balau, *op. cit.*, p. 169; Hymans, *Frère Orban*, I. p. 543.

[2] Juste, *op. cit.*, p. 293: "Notwithstanding the gravity with which the rioting was viewed it was recognized that it was an artificial demonstration caused by those who wished the overturning of the Ministry to obtain office themselves." The public called it the Kid-glove Riot.

"I will mount on horseback if necessary to protect the national representation, I will not allow the majority to be outraged." His voice, his gesture, his look all revealed profound indignation. "This is the death of the Parliamentary *régime*," he continued, with still greater force. "You will understand that, gentlemen; you understand that, to-day, the 28th of May, the Parliamentary *régime* has been ended, the Constitution has been violated; yes, the Constitution has been violated. I have kept my oath for twenty-six years; now I am relieved from it! Let that not be forgotten." [1]

Already the Minister for War, directed by the King, had ordered all the troops available from other garrisons to march to Brussels and its environs. The King, after an hour's deliberation, declared it was his intention to summon the principal members of the Opposition on the morrow and explain to them the painful feeling the agitation roused in him. Such a proceeding was unusual, but the King considered circumstances authorized it.

Nevertheless, when the Council met again on the morrow at midday, there was no longer question of this assembly or of any convocation of the leaders of the Left. The King had conceived another project. He presented a note to the Council which embodied the three articles voted on the 27th, and proposed to have them passed as a special law on that day itself, *séance tenante*, by the Chamber. By that

[1] Juste, *op. cit.*, p. 293. On a cherché à mettre en doute le langage qui est prêté ici au roi d'après des notes écrites le jour même par un des ministres qui assistaient au conseil mais, d'autre part, il a été affirmé, que ce langage est rigoureusement exact.—Woeste, *Le Roi Léopold. Sa politique.*

means, he said, the dignity of the Government would be preserved, and an end put to the discussion which agitated the country. Two Ministers warmly approved of the idea of the King, the others rallied to it; but this attempt at a solution of the difficulty was, in its turn, abandoned. Instead, at a Conference which took place in the room of the President of the Chamber between the delegates of the two parties, adjournment to the 2nd of June was decided on.

On the 30th of May the situation changed again. The Ministers having learned that the Liberals would not consent to a compromise, returned to the idea of making a separate Bill of the articles already adopted, and passing it at a single sitting; but no sooner had they come to this decision than disquieting news from the provinces, and the information that Brussels was hostile, caused dissensions to break out within the Cabinet itself. A fresh Cabinet Council was hastily summoned at which the King presided, and the Prime Minister, supported by the majority of the Cabinet, proposed to adjourn Parliament again. The King would have preferred the forcing through of the Bill, but he signed the order for adjournment, and the Prime Minister went to the Chamber and read it.

"King Leopold acted during the crisis," says M. Woeste, "with an energy equal to the situation. He sustained the majority of the Chamber, and sought to make the Constitutional *régime* respected. He understood that if the Constitution obliged him in normal circumstances to maintain an almost passive attitude, it was his duty in difficult circumstances, such as every country may have to

face, to use his prestige and invoke services rendered to protect established order against enterprises of the street. The rôle which he played at this moment constitutes without contradiction one of the most honourable pages of his reign. To desire himself to defend the national representation and the menaced majority, to convoke the members of the Opposition, to address many reproaches to them; to make a special law of the three articles voted by the Chamber and thus introduce into our legislation the essential principles of the Ministerial project on Charities was to show himself animated by the spirit of decision and vigour necessary for obtaining success. It was to act at once as an honest man, and as a sovereign faithful to his oath." [1]

The King's good will remained sterile. The Ministry and the majority behind its back were assured of his support in refusing concession to disorder, but the counsels he gave on the 28th and the 29th of May were successively disregarded. Riot remained victorious, the Chamber adjourned, and the Charity Bequest Bill was abandoned. On the 13th of June the Cabinet presented a report to the King proposing the closing of the session. The Chief of the State could not refuse the Minister's request. He had not succeeded in making energetic ideas prevail: he had now to counsel moderation. This he did in a letter addressed to M. Dedeker in which he said: "Do not hesitate to say moderation and reserve are necessary to the parties. I believe we should refrain from raising any question which might agitate the public. I am convinced that

[1] Woeste, *op. cit.*, I. p. 19.

Belgium can live happily and respected, following the rule of moderation. In the circumstances in which we are situated the majority of the Chamber, whose desires, as those of the majority, are and ought to be my guide, has a noble position to take. My desire is to continue with you and your colleagues to watch over the interests of this beautiful and beloved country."

The cries of the Liberals for war on the Convents led to counter cries in some of the Catholic newspapers, and by some of the clergy, for peace on the terms proposed by the Catholic Government. When the clamours grew loud King Leopold took counsel outside of Belgium. Guizot preached moderation, Thiers advised the King not to lean chiefly on the clergy, but to look to the intermediary classes for support to the throne. This advice had weight with King Leopold, who had no desire to abandon the Conservative Cabinet, but sought to guide it, while restraining the clergy by the aid of Rome. At the King's request and that of the Prime Minister, Adolphe Descamps, a prominent Catholic politician, brother of a leading ecclesiastic, then Bishop of Bruges, later Archbishop of Malines and Cardinal, undertook a journey to further the policy of appeasement. To him the King wrote on the 18th of September: "I have again to impress on you the importance that there is for Belgium in the maintenance of a Conservative Cabinet. This importance is equally great for Rome, and explanation will be very useful there. It was my impression in June that the Conservative party would issue from its difficulties by moderate and generous conduct. This was understood, but the

action of the press and of some individuals has greatly spoiled and weakened that good position. That must not be repeated, it would injure the position in a most disastrous manner." At Rome, where Descamps had several audiences with the Pope and Cardinal Antonelli, prudence was advised. From the Eternal City the Belgian emissary returned with a plan described as one of gentlemanly politics. According to this plan the Parliamentary campaign was to be opened by the King in his speech from the throne, in patriotic and adroit phrases, recommending calm to the country and respect for the representative *régime*, recommending moderation to the opposition, and recommending the majority to follow the advice given in the royal letter of the 13th of June. This plan was not submitted to King Leopold. While Descamps was still in Rome, elections to the Communal Councils took place. Liberals already held the majorities in the cities. At the elections their candidates were again victorious in all of the great cities. The majority of the Cabinet, regarding the votes of city electors as a national pronouncement against the Government, resigned. Their action was in opposition to the advice of the King, who asked them to attach no political importance to the election of town councillors. Never was a Cabinet more strongly adjured to retain office than was this Cabinet by King Leopold. On the 18th of October, nine days before the elections, the King presided over a council which lasted for two hours. "Remember," he said, closing the sitting, "you have all my confidence. Remember," he said again, turning back from the door as he

was leaving the room and leaning on the back of his arm-chair, "you are in the fortress, and no one can make you leave it, but yourselves." [1]

Notwithstanding this royal insistence, on the 30th of October, three days after the Communal elections, the Prime Minister and the majority of his colleagues placed their resignation in the hands of the King in a letter in which they declared, "The Cabinet, which considered it its duty to resist illegal manifestation, is obliged to surrender before the legal manifestations which have taken place in the principal towns of the country, which because of circumstances, despite constitutional principles, have a character essentially political." On the following day the remaining members of the Cabinet, MM. Nothomb and Mercier, placed their resignation in the hands of the King, so as not to separate themselves from the majority of their colleagues, at the same time stating their opinion that the resignation of a Cabinet which preserved the King's confidence and was supported by a solid parliamentary majority was unconstitutional and dangerous for the country.

Having resigned, the outgoing Ministers proceeded to decide on the policy they would pursue in future towards the head of the Government. Neither the four Ministers who declared in their letter to the King that resignation was inevitable, nor the two who declared in theirs that resignation should not have been contemplated, seem to have thought that the King would have accepted their resignation as definite. At most they expected a rearrangement of the Cabinet. They did not think it possible

[1] Juste, *op. cit.*, p. 301.

that the King would turn from the Catholics to form a Liberal Ministry. They thought the King had shown himself a partisan of the existing Government. They were mistaken. It was of his own power, exercised with prudence, King Leopold was partisan. The Ministers thought the King a puppet, while all the time it was he who pulled the strings. When they refused to be guided by him, he let them fall, and brought forward the Liberals, whom, in turn, he dominated.

King Leopold had not abandoned the hope of tranquillizing the country by means of a coalition Cabinet. When the resignation of the Ministers was placed in his hands he sent for Henri de Brouckere, who from 1852 to 1855 had been chief of a Cabinet of Liberal colour and transactional spirit. De Brouckere sought to form a Ministry analogous to that of 1852, but the younger Liberals would hear of no compromise with the Catholics. "I told him," wrote Frère Orban, "that what it might have been thought admissible to do in that epoch, to prevent Catholic or mixed parties from coming to power, would be incomprehensible to-day, done with the intention of opposing the accession of Liberal opinion." [1]

When Henri de Brouckere announced his inability to form a Ministry, the King sent for Charles Rogier. The repeated summonses of Liberal statesmen to the Palace were announced in the newspapers, but the outgoing Ministry seem to have been blind to their importance. The Catholic Ministry had left the fort which the King had so forcibly declared to them none could force them

[1] Hymans, *op. cit.*, I. 558.

to evacuate but themselves, but they held that King Leopold should compel them to re-enter it. Because the Ministry hauled down its flag, the King was accused of treachery. "Some contended that it should be proper to appeal to the country," says M. Woeste, "in presence of the recent events, but to confide that appeal to a Liberal Cabinet was to charge it with the dispersal of the Catholic majority by striking its partisans with discouragement and the functionaries with terror; it was to alter the expression of national will in advance, and with deliberate intention." [1]

So sure were the Catholics of being recalled to office, the outgoing Prime Minister and his friends were holding a quasi-Cabinet Council, on the 8th of November, to decide on the action to be adopted in the Chamber on its reopening on the 10th, when M. van Praet, King Leopold's secretary, arrived to announce that the Liberal Cabinet was formed. The King had brusquely turned to MM. Rogier and Frère Orban and had authorized them to dissolve the Chamber. Nine days, considered a phenomenally short period by the astonished Catholics, had passed between the resignation of M. Dedeker and the appointment of his successor.[2]

Catholic historians allege that King Leopold sold

[1] Woeste, *op. cit.*, pp. 22, 23.

[2] Members of the King's entourage are said to have conspired with the Liberals to oust the Catholics. E. de Moreau says: "Précisément informé de la crise, Descamps revint de Rome et fit savoir à van Praet qu'il était disposé à assumer la charge du pouvoir. La lettre ne fut pas communiquée au roi, son conseiller feignait de l'avoir égarée et retrouvé seulement après l'avènement au pouvoir du Cabinet Frère-Rogier." E. de Moreau, *Adolphe Descamps*, p. 259. Van Praet, King Leopold's Secretary, was brother-in-law of Devaux, the Liberal publicist.

the pass to the Liberals in order to consolidate his throne and safeguard the future of his dynasty, stipulating with the Liberal party for the development of the military organization of the country and the establishment of a redoubtable defensive system. The Liberals on their side contend there was no barter. Rogier, they said, no more bought power than King Leopold sold it; he had promised his support to the King's project for the fortifications of Antwerp eighteen months before the crisis.[1]

Be this as it may, it was to build up the defences of the nation, whose independence was threatened from outside, that the King called the leader of the Liberals to power.[2]

[1] Hymans, *op. cit.*, p. 560. Discailles, *Charles Rogier*, IV. 35.

[2] Woeste, *op. cit.*, p. 24. Up to this period Leopold I placed no reliance on the strength of the Liberal party. On the 14th of June, 1857, Stockmar wrote: "The King has more than once said to me, 'The Catholic party is the only one that has any strength, the Liberal party is like a rope of sand.'" And again, on the 21st of June, Stockmar, who was opposed to the Catholics, wrote: "Je n'ignore que le roi a pour le parti Catholique une prédilection plus absolue et contre l'avènement des Libéraux une répugnance plus fort que je ne ressents moi-même."—*Memoirs of Baron Stockmar*, pp. 540, 563.

CHAPTER XIV

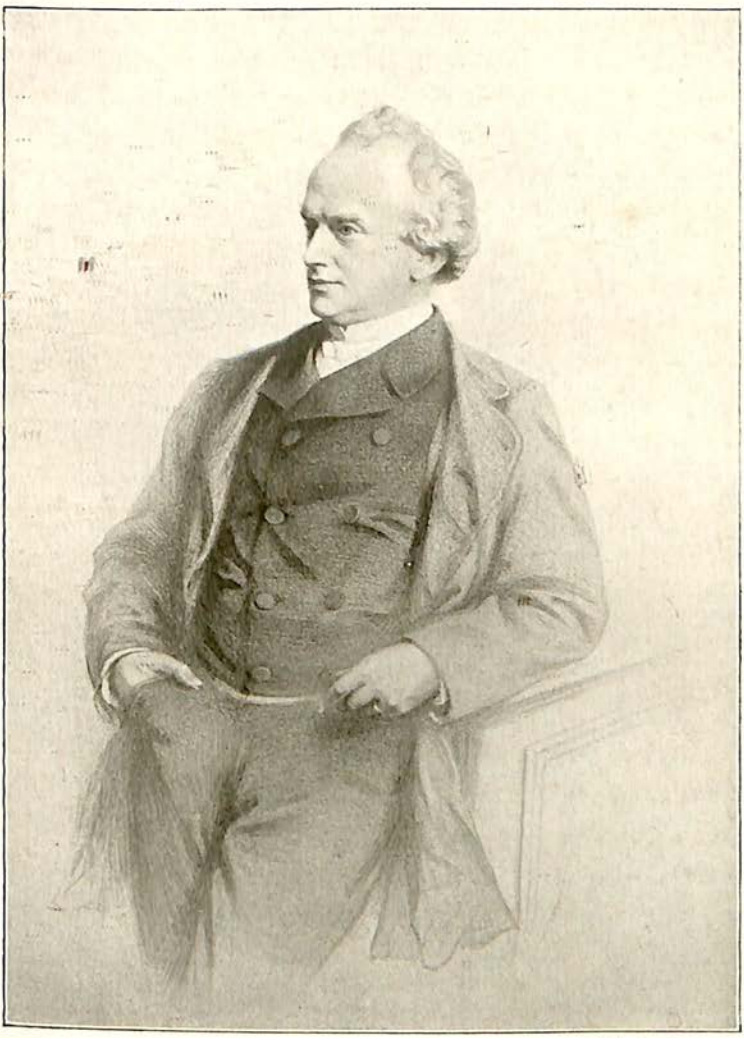
BELGIUM AND FRANCE

(1851–1870)

DANGER from France threatened Belgium throughout the reign of Napoleon III. "On the morrow of the *coup d'état* the Prince-President sent to the *Moniteur* a decree annexing Belgium to France," declared Frère Orban in the Belgian Chamber. "That decree was withdrawn on the night on which it was about to appear, and then only on the instance and supplication of a person devoted to the Prince, who represented to him the dangers he would incur, and those which he would cause France to incur by an aggression of this sort; but the act existed, and if the decree was withdrawn, the intention remained." [1]

Plausible reasons for aggression against Belgium were not wanting to Louis Napoleon. The *coup d'état* had driven fugitive to Belgium proscribed professors, poets, and politicians. The Belgian people offered these men hospitality; the Govern-

[1] Hymans, *Frère Orban*, II. 6. The speech in which Frère Orban made this declaration was made forty years after the event, on the 12th of April, 1892, but as early as 1852 the history of the decree was published in Belgium. *La Nation*, on the 13th of September that year, published the supposed text of the decree which Louis Napoleon was said to have sent to the *Moniteur*, and the duc de Morny to have removed from the Imprimerie National.



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ment did not refuse them the right of asylum; public opinion in Belgium was sympathetic to them. People pointed out the most illustrious exiles, glorified the most obscure. Their misfortunes were honoured; their lectures applauded, their papers read. Their brochures, printed in Brussels in small form to escape the searches of the French police, were smuggled across the frontier, and scattered broadcast in France. The Belgian Radicals and their press took up the cause of the French fugitives, and spluttered abuse of Louis Napoleon and his Government. The members of Louis Napoleon's Government were astounded by the impunity of speech and the tolerance which the refugees enjoyed. Having in a single day silenced France, they were convinced they could easily silence Belgium. On the publication of violent articles in the *Bulletin Français*, published by Orleanists in Brussels, who were infuriated by the decree confiscating the goods of Louis Philippe, the French Legation insisted on the prosecution of M. d'Haussonville and Alexandre Thomas. The French insistence was disastrous. The refugees were sent for trial and acquitted, the jury expressing opinions which aroused fierce resentment in France.

Some years later, at the moment the war in the East was declared, the Emperor Napoleon caused a declaration to be made to the Belgian Government, represented by MM. de Brouckere and Faïder, that if treaties were torn in the East he would no longer consider them as obligatory in the West.[1]

[1] Hymans, *op. cit.*, I. 400.

The signification of these words was clear; it was necessary to appeal to the other Powers for an explanation of this new principle of International Law: and there was an explanation.

After the war in the East, when the power of Napoleon III preponderated, a Congress was held in Paris to regulate the conditions of peace, and the Emperor caused his plenipotentiary there to use expressions which were equivalent to menaces to Belgium. Through his representative, Napoleon III denounced the Belgian press to the Powers, and spoke as Louis XIV spoke of the press of Holland before invading that country. For years previously the Belgian Government had been occupied with the consideration of plans for strengthening the defence of the country. In 1845, General Chazel had laid before a Military Committee a plan for the defence of Belgium, which had for its base the reorganization of the army, the demolition of the greater part of the fortified situations, and the establishment of a vast entrenched camp at Antwerp. When the preparations were about to be undertaken for the execution of this plan, rumours about it reached Paris, and roused the susceptibilities of the Imperial Government. The Emperor summoned the Belgian Minister at Paris to him; showed him the plans of the town of Antwerp, and complained bitterly of the project of increasing its fortifications, and demolishing the existing fortifications in other places, the maintenance of which he held to be obligatory to Belgium by the treaty of 1841. The French Emperor indicated certain fortified

places which were, he said, the last supports for his army, if, in an eventuality he did not foresee, he found himself obliged to enter Belgium. Philippeville and Mariembourg, destined to be demolished, were the chief of these, he declared.

This was the situation in 1857, when Leopold I called the Liberal leaders to power, in order to utilize the zeal of Charles Rogier in opposition to the covetousness of Napoleon III. Of all Belgian statesmen, Rogier was the one whose ambition for his country was the greatest. If Napoleon III dreamt of a Rhenish frontier, Rogier also dreamt of one, but he dreamt of it for Belgium. An ardent patriot, he was more than once hypnotized by the thought of seeing Belgium aggrandized, without allowing himself to be restrained by a consideration of the danger the desired aggrandizements might bring. He had as principal adviser, Emile Banning, a man of vast knowledge, but of a somewhat utopian spirit, who nourished the hope of a greater Belgium, dreaming of the reconstitution of the State provinces such as they were under the Dukes of Burgundy.[1]

No Minister could be more whole-hearted in his efforts to advance and strengthen the military interests of his country than Rogier. Yet a moment came when Leopold I found him and the Cabinet he led too slow, and heaped bitter reproaches on them, forcing to their council, without legal appointment, as Minister for War, a nominee of his own. It was the fear of French aggression

[1] A. de Ridder, "La Belgique et la question des duchés danoises de 1863–1864," *La revue Générale*, 1911, p. 863.

that caused the King to act in this manner. Writers who described Leopold I as one who exercised the limited rights of a Constitutional King in the most scrupulous manner, seemed to be unaware of this incident, when he spoke and acted as a despot.

It happened in August 1858, a short time after the mysterious interview between Napoleon III and Cavour at Plombières, when the Italian War seemed imminent and Belgium's peace was threatened. The project for the remodelling of the entrenched camp at Antwerp was before the Chamber. King Leopold determined that the remodelling of Belgium's defences should be carried out under the directions of General Chazel, in whom his confidence was reposed, and commanded that officer to act immediately as Minister for War. The actual War Minister, General Bertin, possessed the confidence of his colleagues, and they declined to supplant him. Thereupon King Leopold imposed Chazel on the Ministry, nominally as an intermediary, really as a dictator. The King's views were communicated to Rogier and General Bertin by his secretary, van Praet. Both Ministers agreed to the royal demand, and they signed a letter to the King, which van Praet himself drafted, stating that they would accept Chazel as intermediary, without any public or official designation. This letter was written on the 2nd of March. The next day, to the astonishment of all the Ministry, General Bertin received this indignant letter from King Leopold: "I am astonished at the note you have sent me, at the

word 'we' which you employ in an affair which concerns the Army which the King commands conformably to the Constitution. I send you back this note, it being perfectly improper.

"Lieutenant-General Chazel will fulfil the functions of the Chief of the État-Major General of the Army, while retaining the command he actually holds. He will treat with you on all military affairs, for which you alone in the Cabinet are responsible." [1]

This note was at once communicated by the Minister for War to Rogier. At the moment the Prime Minister made no protest against the claim made in it by the King to decide on military affairs without the intervention of the Cabinet. Instead, he wrote to van Praet protesting that the Minister for War and he had acted, as they thought, entirely in conformity with the King's wishes, and that there was a great misunderstanding. The matter, says the biographer of Rogier, was amicably arranged. In fact, the Cabinet submitted, and a few weeks later General Bertin was officially replaced as Minister of War by General Chazel. This victory did not alone suffice King Leopold. Early in the following year, when war between France and Germany was imminent, the King again attacked the Ministry with violent reproaches, abusing them for having delayed the entry of General Chazel into the Cabinet. To the angry remonstrances of the King, Rogier drafted a reply in May 1859, in which, while he protested that the Cabinet was doing all that was necessary

[1] Discailles, *Charles Rogier.*

and possible to prepare the defences of Belgium, he pointed out that the King had written in March to the previous Minister for War declaring that Minister was the only member of the Cabinet who had a right to occupy himself with military matters; that this declaration of the King's assigned a passive rôle to the Cabinet, notwithstanding which, the Cabinet had shown itself zealous in carrying out measures pointed out to it as really desirable and urgent, as well as in executing those its members themselves considered necessary. The Cabinet, Rogier added, "accepts with respect the observations of the King, whatever they are, but it rejects, as it should, the remonstrances which are addressed to it by subordinate agents, ignorant of what passes in the country out of which they have lived for a long time." The reference to "subordinate agents" was directed at van de Weyer, who wrote alarming and urgent letters to the Cabinet from England, and was supposed to voice the wishes and desires of the English Court.

At this juncture King Leopold was not content with speaking in private to the Cabinet. A new project was presented to the Chamber for the fortifications of Antwerp. While that measure was being debated, the Chamber presented an address to the Throne of congratulation on the birth of the Count of Hainaut. The King seized the occasion, and in his reply, read the Chamber a lesson on its duties to the country, and on the necessity of "Belgium existing by herself." [1]

The King's influence prevailed. In the note

[1] Discailles, *op. cit.*, IV. 105.

defending the action of the Government, which he addressed to King Leopold, the Prime Minister had boasted that the Government had asked for a credit of nine millions of francs for the national defence. In the project brought forward by General Chazel and voted by the Chamber on the 29th of August, 1859, forty-five millions of francs were allotted for the works at Antwerp. Of this sum, however, twenty millions were for a work of a civil nature, intending to soften the opposition of the citizens to the military work. Indignation at this vote was unbounded in France; the opposition press in Belgium was no less indignant. The Government, swayed by the King, was accused of serving the interests of England without utility to Belgium.

"Egotistical England, perfidious England," cried the *Journal de Bruxelles*, "will never have our sympathy. Never with our consent shall Antwerp be made a second Gibraltar." [1]

No danger threatened Belgium from England, but from the moment that Prussia rose, the danger that Belgium's independence would fall before a combination of France and Prussia was real enough. Bismarck, who was entrusted by King William of Prussia with the direction of Prussian politics in 1862, was as determined as Napoleon III to change the map of Europe.

Then the question of the Danish duchies rose; Rogier thought for a moment that Belgium might profit by the spoliation of Denmark. "Belgium is not systematically opposed to annexation,"

[1] Hymans, *op. cit.*, II. 80.

wrote the French Minister at Brussels, the Marquis de la Ferrières, to Drouyn de Lhuys on the 16th of March, 1864. "Monsieur Rogier has shown me a document inserted in a recent Viennese publication. It is a project of Lord Castlereagh's which had for object the reunion of part of the Rhenish Provinces to the Kingdom of the Low Countries. But it is pretended," said M. Rogier, laughing to me, "that if Germany puts her hand on the duchies, your Government would claim a rectification of the frontiers on the North, and the erection of a new neutral State on the Rhine. Why should not we be that neutral State? Give us Maestricht and Cologne, and we will separate you from Germany by strong boulevards, by a real wall of China." Some days later, returning to the affair, M. de la Ferrières wrote: "I had occasion to remind M. Rogier of the dream of a Rhenish Belgium. He persists in it, and he pretends that if we do not wish to suppress Belgium, we can only gain by enlarging her. He has spoken again to me of Maestricht. I said to him, 'That is not related to an affair with the Germanic Confederation, but with Holland.' 'Very well,' he replied. 'Holland can be indemnified.'" [1]

All in Belgium but Rogier saw danger threatening their country in the partitioning of minor States. France showed her hand in the attacks made against the King of the Belgians, who was continually

[1] *Les origines diplomatiques de la guerre de* 1870–71, tome III. p. 27. M. de Ferrières added, "I must add that in holding this language he always took care to say to me, 'It is poetry and fantasy,' but he admits that poetry and fantasy have often passed into history."

represented as the creature of England. In 1864, M. Lavallée published a work *Les Frontières de la France*, which set forth Napoleon III's theory of natural frontiers. Savoy, Belgium and the Rhenish frontier lands were all represented as belonging naturally and by right to France. According to M. Lavallée a majority of the National Congress of Belgium in 1830, in accord with public opinion, inclined towards the re-entry of Belgium into French unity, but England was opposed to it. The King of the Belgians, subject to the Britannic influence, was nothing but a sort of English Prefect. The entrenched camp of Antwerp might become a citadel of the Coalition, while as to the Belgian neutrality, it was chimerical and impossible. In spite of all, the author concluded, France would recover her northern frontiers. Her natural limits being then arrived at, the peace of the world would be assured.

There were still publicists in Belgium who applauded the sentiments expressed in this work. In the next year Descamps published a book in which he declared the situation in Belgium to be dangerous; showed that the independence of Belgium was menaced by Germany and France; and dwelt on the possibilities of a transaction by which the Belgian territories would be partitioned, one-third going to France; England being appeased by the surrender of Antwerp to Holland. The publication of these works led to violent controversy in the press, in the midst of which King Leopold I died.

Nothing changed in Belgium with the death of

the King. That wise and patriotic Sovereign was succeeded by a ruler no less wise or patriotic. The Belgian Government was not without fear of the action which ambitious France would take at the moment of the King's death. It was reassured by Lord Cowley, the English Ambassador at Paris, to whom the Emperor expressed his certainty that power in Belgium would pass without disturbance. The Ambassador considered that Napoleon III was never less desirous of annexing Belgium than at that moment. Such also was the opinion of the Foreign Minister, Lord Clarendon, who declared that nothing short of a general manifestation of public opinion in Belgium in favour of annexation could provoke action on the part of France. Such a manifestation was not to be feared. No danger threatened Belgium from within, but, notwithstanding the friendly declaration of the Emperor, the French Empire remained a perpetual danger to Independent Belgium. That danger was redoubled after Sadowa, when Prussia, victorious over Austria, sprang to the position of a Great Power. It was in Belgium that France, irritated to see her pretensions to the European suzerainty ruined by the apparition of a formidable political and military opponent, sought a fresh outlet. In the Councils of the Empire opinions differed, but in every combination Belgium was included. No one spared her.

Napoleon III had expected the Austrian-Prussian War to be a long one. At its commencement he took the rôle of attentive neutrality, intending at an opportune moment to interpose in a decisive

manner and claim for himself the lion's share. The speedy termination of the war left him disoriented. From the incertitude in which he found himself, there was born his policy of compensation, that policy which Bismarck contemptuously called "La politique des pourboires." The French Emperor sought, by diplomacy in turn astute and daring, to obtain territorial aggrandizement from Prussia. He obtained nothing. The treaty he proposed to Prussia by which he was to be allowed a free hand to seize Belgium, appeasing England, if necessary, by the erection of Antwerp into a free town, was rejected by Bismarck. When this treaty was proposed on the part of France by Count Benedetti, to Bismarck, King Leopold II and his Ministers obtained secret information regarding it. It was a moment at which it was most necessary to give France no excuse for intervention in Belgium. Nevertheless, Rogier persisted in putting forward a claim for the surrender of Luxembourg to Belgium, and he went so far that King Leopold II found it necessary in order to check him, and his colleagues in the Cabinet, to disavow his plans more or less implicitly.[1]

The situation of Luxembourg was strange. Although part of the Germanic Confederation, and itself a separate State, it was incorporated in the Kingdom of the Low Countries, and had no separate institutions. Moreover, Luxembourg, its capital strongly fortified, had a Federal garrison. This garrison, furnished at first by Prussia and the Low Countries, became exclusively Prussian from 1856.

[1] De Ridder, *op. cit.*

The war of 1866 reopened the question of Luxembourg. The Grand Duchy, after the dissolution of the Germanic Confederation, was left outside the group of the States of North Germany, of which Prussia was the centre. Free from all Federal ties it was bound only by the international engagements of 1815. Prussian troops still occupied the country, and Prussia refused to evacuate it, although she had no justification for doing so. When it became clear at Paris that the attempts to annex Belgium immediately would fail, the desires of the French Government were turned towards the Grand Duchy. "Besides," said Benedetti, "once at Luxembourg, we shall be on the road to Brussels. We shall arrive there more quickly in travelling that way."

Forced to abandon the attempt of annexing the Grand Duchy, France demanded the evacuation of Luxembourg by Prussia. Prussia refused to move her forces, and the situation became more strained than ever, when Austria stepped in with the suggestion of a new combination. This was that Luxembourg should be annexed to Belgium, France being compensated by the cession of a band of Belgian territory which would re-establish the frontier of 1814. The population of the Grand Duchy was two hundred thousand people; that of the part of Hainaut, and of the Province of Namur, which it was suggested should be surrendered by Belgium to France, contained about the same number of people. The Emperor Napoleon would have considered the acceptance of this proposal a glorious success for him. The reconstitution of

the frontier of 1814, which the allies had reduced in 1815, would have flattered French pride. The abrogation of the treaty of 1815 was one of the fixed ideas of his reign. It was erroneously thought Belgium would be pleased by the annexation of Luxembourg. In Belgium, when Austria's proposal was known, there was not a moment's hesitation. Not even to obtain possession of the Grand Duchy would a morsel of Belgian soil be surrendered. The Continental Powers, eager to prevent war, would have brought pressure to bear on Belgium to accept the combination, but Belgium was assured that the English Government would support her in rejecting the proposal, and finding England determined Napoleon disavowed the plan. The question of Luxembourg was finally settled at a Conference held at London, which maintained the independence of the Grand Duchy, and proclaimed its neutrality; and Luxembourg was evacuated by Prussia and its fortresses dismantled. The next attempt of France was to establish a Customs Union with Belgium. The aim of the French Government in this was easily seen. The Belgian Government, supported by the leading traders of the country, succeeded in defeating the project.

The affair of the Belgian Railways was the terminating point of the long series of attempts which the French Empire made to obtain possession of Belgium. Some months after her failure to annex the Grand Duchy, France succeeded in obtaining control of the railways of Luxembourg. The negotiations were carried on in secret. Guaran-

teed by the French Government, the Compagnie de l'Est had obtained the transfer of ownership before opposition could be raised to it in the Parliament of the Grand Duchy. An attempt to gain possession of the Belgian Railways followed. In January 1869, by a secret convention, the Compagnie de l'Est obtained control of the Liègois-Luxembourg and the Nord-Luxembourg lines, of the greatest commercial as well as strategic importance. The moment the Belgian Government obtained knowledge of this transaction it acted. A Bill was passed making it illegal for railway companies to transfer the lines of which they were concessionnaires without the consent of the Government. The Emperor Napoleon did not conceal his indignation at this. The measure was a pact, he declared, between Frère Orban and Bismarck. "I shall insist on the law being repealed," he announced to the Austrian Ambassador, Metternich, who repeated the conversation to the Belgian Minister at Paris.

The French Minister at this moment in Brussels was the Vicomte de la Gueronnière, a journalist, newly turned diplomatist. Of M. de la Gueronnière, Émile Ollivier wrote: "A novel diplomatist, little or nothing of an orator, although he spoke much; he was above all impatient to make a way for himself towards the heights, and sit alongside those whom he had often celebrated, or amiably scratched with his pen. He was tall, slightly stooping, with winking eyes, the air of a gentleman, and amiable manners, though somewhat furtive; without venom, but without surety. While waiting

for his literary genius to carry him to the Academy and his political genius to carry him to the Foreign Office, he went to Brussels to gather his first laurels, and he announced it so much that his first laurels created a sensation. It was supposed that he came at least to prepare the annexation by a Customs Treaty."

In his salon in Brussels, in the presence of French and Belgians, this novel diplomatist spoke openly in language hostile to Belgian neutrality, and even to Belgian independence. He declared that no one in Belgium wished for better than to become French; that none but the Government were opposed to the desire of the greater number.

With this representative in Brussels, so openly voicing his master's views, Napoleon III came near to an open rupture with Belgium. The question of the railways was presented as an economical, not a political one. It was pretended by the French that the action of the Belgian Chamber in refusing French companies right to obtain concession in Belgium was not in accordance with the principles of liberty which dominated the Belgian commercial system, or with the Belgian treaties with France. Violent disputes followed between Brussels and Paris. Throughout the negotiations Belgium had the support of England, although the Liberal party, at that moment returned to power in England, was supposed in Belgium to be inclined to favour the policy of Napoleon III.

"When the situation became aggravated," says Hymans, "the solicitude of the English Govern-

ment showed itself actively in Brussels, where Mr. Savile Lumley rendered us precious services. In Paris Lord Lyons acted with tact and vigilance. Queen Victoria retained a cult for the memory of King Leopold I and continued to our new King a part of the affection she had a long time devoted to his father. The English press, moreover, during the whole duration of the incident, rang loud with its sympathies for the Belgian cause." [1]

When the situation was most grave, Frère Orban went to Paris and had several interviews with Napoleon III. In the end of April a rupture seemed certain, when suddenly the Emperor changed his position, withdrew his declaration that he would force the Belgian Parliament to repeal its law forbidding railways to make unauthorized concessions, and consented to the appointment of a mixed commission to arrange the best means of through railway traffic between Belgium and France.

It was England that won this victory for Belgium, as was disclosed in the cipher telegram from the Belgian Minister at London, Baron Beaulieu, to Jules Devaux, on the 22nd of April: "The English Minister said yesterday to the French Ambassador, that the Emperor had better take care; that if M. Frère Orban leaves without having done anything, there may be serious results for the Emperor, who would do more harm to himself than Belgium; that public opinion is such in Europe that general reprobation would arise and kill all confidence in

[1] Hymans, *op. cit.*, II. 228.

his Majesty; the English Minister thinks that the phase of negotiations has not yet passed.[1]

Notwithstanding the Emperor's consent to negotiate, the danger to Belgium from France grew greater than ever. Napoleon, finding his situation desperate, sought some one to fling himself upon. Nothing but England's firm friendship saved Belgium from being the foe against whom he led his army in 1870. The Belgian Minister in London described the situation to Frère Orban: "The first results of the elections were received by the Emperor with a certain satisfaction. The Orleanists are his *bêtes noires*, and their discomfiture could not fail to cause him great joy. But when one came to consider the figures, and take into account the number, the quality, and the means which it was necessary to employ to obtain a 'devoted' majority, the violence, the corruption, the manner in which the ignorance of the peasants was abused, great irritation succeeded joy, for it was clear, personal government was such an object of reprobation that one should be blind not to recognize it. The Emperor is like a bull released into the arena, taut on his hams, with enflamed eyes, seeking some one, something, on which to sate his rage. If Prussia gives him the slightest pretext at this moment, he will fling himself on Prussia. The state of mind which reigns at the Tuileries and in their orbit, is particularly dangerous for Belgium." [2]

[1] Hymans, *op. cit.*, 275. Frère Orban was still in Paris seeking to negotiate with the French Government.

[2] Hymans, *op. cit.*, II. 309.

Belgium backed by England being too powerful to fall easily his prey, Napoleon determined to leave that country in peace, and the mixed commission concluded its labours by an agreement which ratified Belgium's victory. The contract by which great Belgian lines were handed over to a foreign company was cancelled. The Belgian lines preserved their autonomy, their tracks and their material. L'Est Française was not given control of the management or influence on the regulation of freight. All it obtained was the right of auditing the accounts of the railway companies until the money it had advanced was finally repaid; a formal provision forbade the French Railway Company to make any combination which would favour the Dutch ports to the prejudice of the Belgian ones. For its part the Belgian Government was given the power to withdraw the concessions for the Belgian lines, and to exploit these lines itself at any moment it thought proper. Direct traffic was organized across Belgium between the French railways and the Dutch railways, and the port of Antwerp was put in direct communication with Switzerland.

Had the possession of the Belgian railway lines passed out of the hands of Belgium it would have been impossible for that country to maintain her neutrality in the war of 1870. The railway of Luxembourg, which the Compagnie de l'Est obtained control of before attempting to secure the Belgian railways, was used during the war for the revictualling of French forces. The Government of the Grand Duchy was unable to prevent

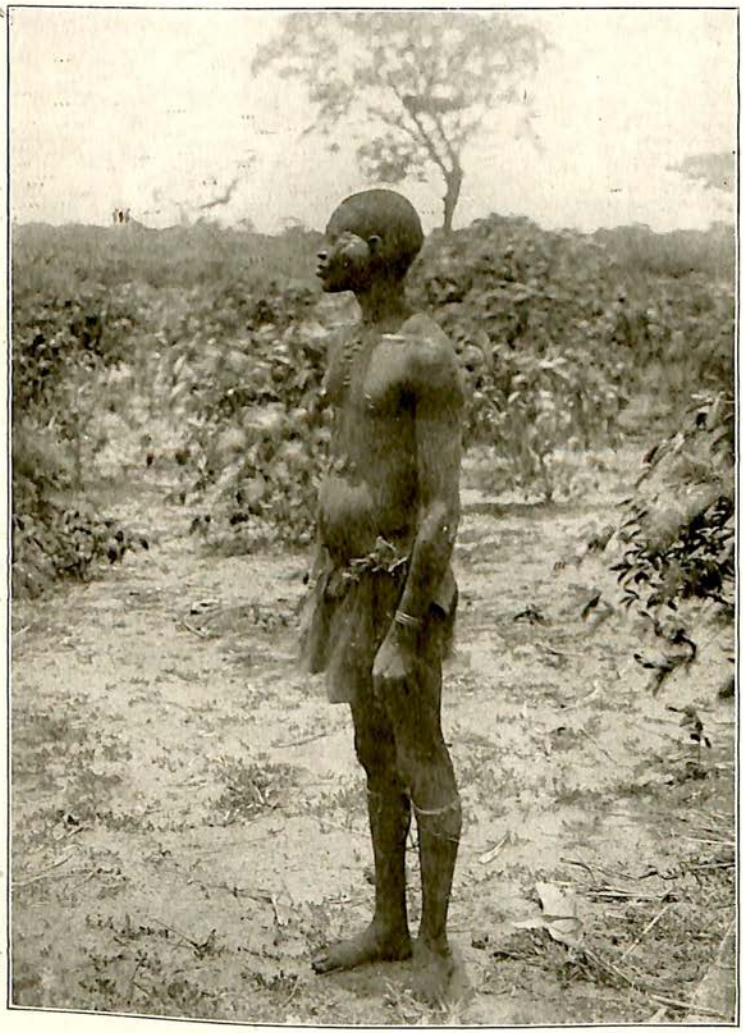
this. Nevertheless, Bismarck intimated to that Government that the railway lines in Luxembourg, owned by Frenchmen, having been used for the French service, the neutrality of Luxembourg was violated and would be no longer recognized by Prussia.

CHAPTER XV

BELGIUM—ENGLAND—THE CONGO

(1870–1914)

THE moment that Leopold I mounted the new-made Belgian throne, England proved herself the defender of Belgium's independence. In the long diplomatic struggle with France which lasted throughout the reign of Leopold I and during the first years of the reign of his successor, England remained Belgium's unswerving supporter. When the Franco-Prussian War broke out no appeal was necessary from Belgium to secure England's support. The ties which so closely bound the cause of Belgium to England during the reign of Leopold I, were scarcely loosened in the earlier years of the reign of Leopold II. In England, political parties united in their eagerness to defend Belgium; the press and the public cried out alike that no violation of Belgian neutrality should be permitted. The publication in *The Times* on the 25th of July, 1870, of a draft of a treaty by which, three or four years before, Count Benedetti, Ambassador of Napoleon III, proposed to Bismarck to hand over Belgium to France, roused England's indignation. On the 1st of August the English Government demanded from Parliament a supplementary credit of two



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A CONGO NATIVE FREED FROM SLAVERY

millions sterling for the maintenance during the war of twenty thousand additional men added to the regular forces. The proposal of the Government was carried by a great majority, and gave occasion for the expression in Parliament of the solicitude of the leaders of every party for the welfare of Belgium. The English Government proposed to France and Prussia to sign a treaty which would be a new safeguard for the security of the Belgian territories. On the 9th of August the Ambassador of the Federation of North Germany signed this treaty; Napoleon hesitated for a time, but he also signed it.

On the 8th of August Leopold II opened an extraordinary session of the Belgian Parliament, and said in his speech from the throne: "Amongst the proofs of benevolence which I have received from the foreign powers I am glad to mention with a gratitude the country will share the solicitude of the Government of her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain for the interests of the Belgian nationality, and the generous support which these sentiments have received in Parliament, as well as in the public opinion of England."

The King added: "Belgium has already been submitted to more than one perilous trial. None had the gravity of that she traverses to-day. By her prudence, her loyal sentiments, by her firm patriotism, she has proved herself worthy of the esteem which other nations accord her, worthy of the prosperity her free institutions have assured her."

The Belgian King was justified in what he said.

The army, placed on a war footing at the commencement of the contest between France and Germany, had by its attitude prevented Belgium from being entered and once again made the scene of an international contest. When the French army found itself repulsed towards the gorge at the end of which the town of Sedan stands, a council of war was called over which the Emperor Napoleon presided. At that council the question was discussed of the army throwing itself into Belgium in order to attempt to gain Lille by marching through the frontiers of Namur and Hainault. This move would have been executed had not one of the French Generals cried out, "Invade Belgium! that would be to draw 70,000 more enemies upon us." In his deposition at the Inquiry Commission of the National Assembly called after the war, Marshal MacMahon said that if he had retained the command at Sèdan he would have been able in case of reverse to throw himself on Belgium; and other army chiefs admitted they had the same idea of seeking a refuge behind the Belgian frontier even at the risk of being followed by the Germans and of making Belgium a new field of battle. "It was the army," said a Belgian orator, quoted by Juste, "that preserved us from foreign invasion and has prevented our free and prosperous Belgium from being the theatre of sanguinary troubles. It then rendered a service which, if it was translated into francs and millions, would be superior to all the army has cost for thirty years." [1]

Although warfare on Belgian soil had been

[1] Juste, *op. cit.*, 875.

averted the situation remained strained. If England's anger was roused against France on the publication of the Benedetti Treaty, Germany was equally enraged against Belgium for the want of gratitude the Belgians showed her. The Germans held with a show of reason that it was they who had preserved Belgian independence by rejecting the treaty proposed to Prussia by Napoleon. They declared King and people had shown themselves ungrateful. By the King no praise was spoken except that given to England; by the press no words were uttered which were not an insult to Germany. To complicate matters the Franco-German War coincided with a parliamentary crisis in Belgium. The elections of 1870 went against the Liberals, and the Catholics returned to power, which they held until 1878, when the Liberals came back to power, which they retained for six years. In 1884 the Catholics regained the majority and formed a Cabinet, which with many changes and modifications of opinion from rigid Conservatism to Radicalism has held office up to the present moment.

In 1870, one of the first acts of the new Premier, Baron d'Anethan, speaking in the Senate, was to repudiate the charges of ingratitude against the Belgians. "The irritation which manifests itself in Germany in public opinion, in the press, and in other regions is due principally to the attitude of certain newspapers here in Belgium. The management of those newspapers is in the hands of strangers; it is the same in a great part in their editorial departments. People are falsely led to consider

the language of the newspapers an expression of public opinion. Their language causes sentiments and preferences which are not ours to be attributed to us in foreign countries." These words of the Belgian Prime Minister were received with attention in Germany, and contributed to lessen the ill-will between the two countries. They are words which might well have been repeated in Belgium during the crisis of the Boer War, or of the Congo agitation. No parallel of the Belgian press exists in England. Few Belgian newspapers gain enough profit to pay their way. With insignificant exceptions all call themselves organs of one or other of the political parties of Belgium. Many have a right to do so, but some, widely circulated outside Belgium as well as in that country, are in reality the mouthpieces of foreign Governments, foes of much which Belgium holds dear. The French journalists who crowded Belgium up to and after the Franco-Prussian War obtained editorial control of many newspapers and used their power in a manner dangerous to Belgium. They fought often as volunteers, always as ardent partisans of the cause they supported. In the recent period, journalists who were neither Belgians by birth or adoption, obtained control of journals considered important outside Belgium. They were mercenaries in the pay of England's enemies, and succeeded in damaging Belgium as well as England by violently upholding what they pretended to be Belgian causes, and attacking England as the foe of Belgium.

For long after the Franco-Prussian War nothing happened to lessen the ties of friendship between

England and Belgium. In 1872 King Leopold presided in London at the Banquet of the Literary Society, where he was received with the utmost enthusiasm. Disraeli, then Prime Minister, in proposing the King's health pronounced a eulogy on him, declaring King Leopold II possessed of every virtue, including that of affection for the English. Next year, Gladstone presided at the Banquet, and he too spoke in eulogistic terms of the King of the Belgians, whom he described as a king after the English fashion. "The King," he said, "is one of those sovereigns from whom we would not be ashamed, if need arose, to receive those lessons in Constitutional Government which we have sometimes the pretension to give; and we consider his visits to England not only as acts gracious and amiable, which leave an indelible impression on the mind; but also as solemn acts of national friendship which tend to confirm and consolidate the affection which unites the Belgian people to ours." Later King Leopold attended the celebration of the anniversary of the foundation of the Royal Academy, at which he was received with equal enthusiasm. These excursions of his to England recall a forgotten phase in the life of Leopold II. Men in these later years regarding him as a Boulevardier, forgot that in the earlier part of his life he was a student, visiting England for serious purposes and acting on the advice given to him by English savants. In his voyages he was early impressed with the necessity for Belgians to obtain a share of the advantages to be gained in the distant continents newly opening to Europeans. His voyages, while duc de Brabant,

in Asia and Africa showed him new prospects. Africa, above all, attracted his attention. He made it the object of persevering studies. He sounded the probable destinies of that vast continent, three times as large as Europe, of which the central region, seven times as large as France, was still unknown. With a growing interest he read the narratives of the intrepid voyagers who during twenty-five years sought the means of penetrating into that mysterious country, heroic in their devotion to science and to humanity. He revolted against the horrible traffic which carried off every year more than 80,000 men, and wiped tribe after tribe out of existence; and he became the promoter of a crusade of which the civilization of Africa was the end.[1]

It was English explorers who told King Leopold of the horrors and the possibilities of darkest Africa.

As the result of conversations with many members of the Royal Geographical Society, King Leopold II became convinced, according to the terms of an official document, that it would be most useful to introduce unity into the work of those who sought to explore and civilize Africa. For this end the King organized an International Conference to which there were invited the presidents of the Geographical Societies of Paris, London, St. Petersburg, Vienna, and Rome, as well as the best-known voyagers and explorers of Africa, and some personages who for a long time had consecrated their efforts to the suppression of the slave trade.

[1] Juste, *op. cit.*, 391. Juste's work was written in 1876, the year in which King Leopold II founded the African Association, from which grew his Congo State.

The Congress was called to perform work "at once scientific, commercial, and humanitarian." [1]

King Leopold may have dreamt already of a Belgian Empire in Africa, but he invited all Europe to join him in the enterprise he undertook there. Had other countries chosen to act with him the association he founded would have remained international in more than name. The Congress which met under his presidency in Brussels in December 1876 was attended by the representatives of England, France, Germany, Austria, Italy, and by numbers of explorers, philosophers, and philanthropists. At that Congress Sir Bartle Frere, Vice-President of the Indian Council, representative of England, took a prominent, it might be said dominating part. His rôle was that of modifying the ardour of the King. King Leopold, putting the suppression of the slave trade and the civilization of the natives in the forefront, desired the establishment of stations connected with each other along the great routes in Central Africa. The work to be instituted by the Congress, as outlined by the King, would have bases of operation, amongst others on the coast of Zanzibar, and near the mouth of the Congo, to be acquired either by conventions with the chiefs, by purchase, or by hire from the holders. The stations, successively to be established towards the interior, were to be organized as a means of abolishing slavery, establishing concord amongst the chiefs, and securing for them just and disinterested arbitrators, and they were to be scientific centres and hospitals. The creation of International and National Committees to carry out the

[1] Juste, *op. cit.*, p. 391.

work of the organization and to collect funds for their furtherance was also suggested.

The Conference did not consider the aims of King Leopold realizable. It put aside for the moment, at least, all question of the suppression of the slave trade. Instead of arming the natives and training them under the guidance of the white chiefs of the stations to combat the Arab slave traders, "the stations were to operate in every circumstance by mildness, by persuasion, relying on the natural ascendancy which the superiority of civilized man creates"; the task, the Conference considered, need not be considerable; the chief of each station should be a man of action and a man of science, either theoretical or technical, a "medical-naturalist," or, perhaps, "an astronomer-physician"; five- or six skilful artisans, instructed in different trades, would be a sufficient staff in most cases. The establishment of connected lines of stations was rejected as unpracticable; instead it was decided to establish stations on the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, with smaller ports of refuge, and another station in a place undetermined in Central Africa in the territories of a chief named Muata-Yamuo. Further, it was decided that the hospital and pacificatory work should not be undertaken, and that the direct object of the International Association should be the exploration of the part as yet unknown of Central Africa.[1]

For the execution of its programme the Conference founded an International Commission under

[1] Emile Banning, *L'Afrique et la Conférence Géographique de Bruxelles*, pp. 140 *et seq.*

the presidency of King Leopold, to whom it entrusted the widest powers, and authorized the formation of autonomous nation committees. Almost at the very moment of its formation England withdrew from the International Association. The statutes of the Royal Geographical Society were invoked as a reason for holding aloof from an enterprise which was not one purely of exploration.

Those who sympathized in England with the opening up of Central Africa were invited to subscribe to an English African Exploration Fund, and Sir Bartle Frere resigning membership of the association, as well as his place in its executive committee, on being appointed Governor of Cape Colony, no further delegates were appointed to the association from England.

It was stated that England's withdrawal was due to her fear of being involved in engagements of an international character; it is probable that the fear of the English Missionary Societies that their separate actions might be interfered with had more to say to this withdrawal. Of the Powers represented at the Congress, England was the only one which had then as yet established in Africa stations similar to those which the International Association proposed to set up. One of the German explorers, M. Rohlfs, pointed out at the Congress, that in the English missions and diplomatic posts, establishments, more modest, but not unlike the proposed stations, were to be found in Africa. The jealousies of English missionaries desirous of acting as traders as well as evangelizers, without interference, had had much to say from first to last to

the difficulties and discords which arose about the Congo, just as the labour of these same missionaries in their proper field, and far more efficaciously of other missionaries who did not seek to go beyond that field, has had much to say to the improvement of the condition of the natives, and their advancement towards civilization.

England's defection from King Leopold's International Association was counterbalanced in a certain degree by the adhesion of the United States of America; the place vacated by Sir Bartle Frere on the Executive Committee was filled by the appointment of General Stanton, sometime Minister of the United States at Brussels. No political result followed the establishment of the English African Exploration Fund. The International Committees founded in France and Germany in connection with the International Association became purely national organizations under the flags of their respective countries; they laid the foundations of the present French and German colonies in Central Africa.

The first meeting of the International Association was held in Brussels in November 1876. Its proceedings were opened by a speech from King Leopold, setting forth the aims of the Association, which were, the King declared, the suppression of the slave trade, which led to the massacre of thousands of victims each year, and the rescue of the still greater number of perfectly innocent beings who, brutally reduced to captivity, were condemned *en masse* to penal servitude for life.

The programme of the International Association as laid down by King Leopold at this meeting was the establishment of stations along the routes followed by the slave merchants, where travellers could halt, and from which a successful campaign for the suppression of the slave trade was to be carried on.

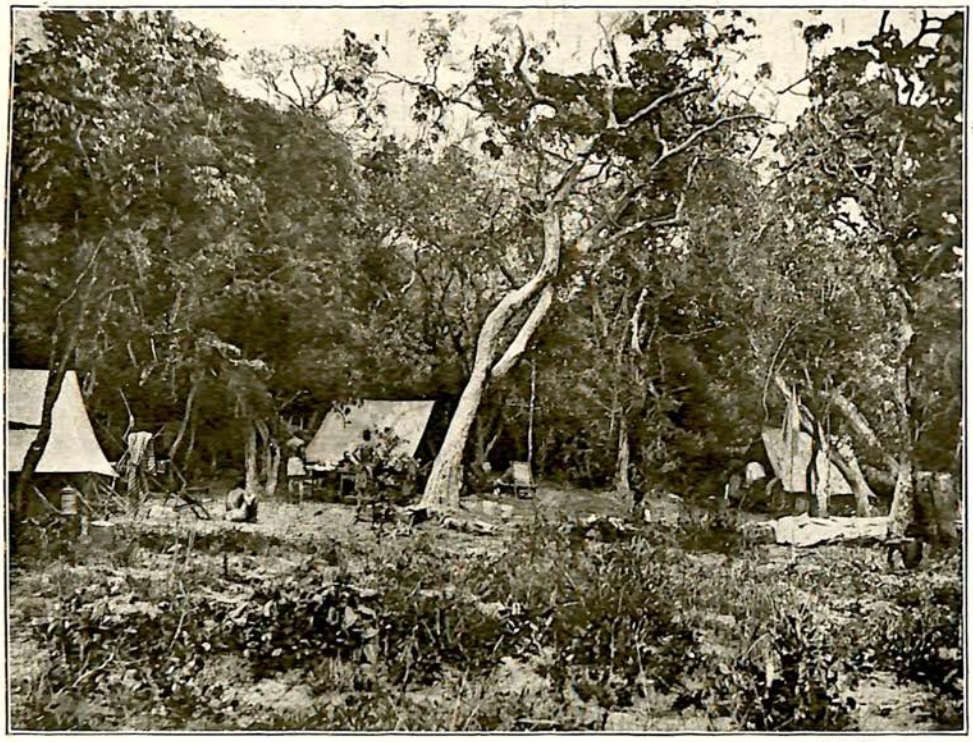
Already the International Association was dominated by the Belgian King. Within its Council his suggestions were commands. Steps were taken immediately to put his plan into execution. Without loss of time expeditions were fitted out to establish stations in Africa in the localities he indicated.

The publication of Stanley's map of the Congo River was made before the first Belgian expedition was sent out. King Leopold was the first to realize the full significance of the discovery of the great waterway, and the only one to profit by it. But because he found a way more open than he had hoped for in the west he did not abandon the other way he determined on opening from the east, and during five years he flung expedition after expedition into Africa from Zanzibar. The earliest stations founded by the Association were in the Tanganyika territory, in the district which Germany later annexed and formed into German East Africa. The sphere of action of the International Association extended far outside both the actual basin and what was mapped out later as the conventional basin of the Congo, but gradually, partly because of his diplomatic withdrawals from the districts coveted by France and Germany, partly because

of the claims of rival powers, the sphere of influence of King Leopold's Association was confined to the Congo Basin, while on the coasts of the two seas there extended the German, English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese possessions which enveloped his central possessions like so many counter forts.

Stanley returned to Europe in January 1878. When he disembarked at Marseilles King Leopold's representatives met him on the quay, and immediately secured his services for their master. In November 1878, at the Palace of Brussels, there was founded the Comité d'Étude du Haut Congo. This company, the nominal capital of which was a million francs, was in fact the personal organization of the Belgian King. In its service in August 1879, Stanley, with thirteen agents under his direction, started again for Africa. Arrived there he mounted the cataracts of the Congo, and commenced the work of exploration and settlement. The work accomplished by his little band was marvellous. "Five years was sufficient to make the most brilliant explorations to the very centre of the continent, to visit pacifically a hundred new races, to obtain from native chiefs more than five hundred treaties of suzerainty, to establish forty stations, to launch five steamers above the cataracts on the river, to construct a road from the sea coast as far as Stanley Falls, and occupy the country from Bangala to Loulouabourg." [1]

[1] Wauters, *État Indépendant du Congo*, p. 27. The representatives of King Leopold who met Stanley at the moment of his arrival in Europe were Baron Greindl and the American diplomatist, General Sanford.



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A CAMP IN THE FOREST OF FUTWESHI (KASAÏ)

While Stanley was constructing the road past the cataracts, Count Savorgnan de Brazza passed on the other side of Stanley Pool, planting the French flag there. At the end of 1882 both Stanley and Brazza returned to Europe and made known to their respective Governments the secrets of the Congo riches. King Leopold's diplomacy avoided a conflict with France. As a result of his negotiation the French Premier, M. Duclerc, addressed a letter to him on the 18th of October, 1882, promising that no obstacles would be placed between the stations established, or to be established, between the International Association and the Comité pour l'Étude du Haut Congo.

This was the first recognition given in Europe to King Leopold's colony. The Committee pour l'Étude du Haut Congo and the International Association were merged into one, and it was in the name of the Association that the final treaties with the natives were concluded. At this moment, when the success of King Leopold's enterprise seemed assured, its whole existence was threatened by Portugal, who on vague grounds claimed vast territories in Africa. To support these claims Portuguese geographers pointed to a column brought centuries before from their country by adventurous navigators, in the hold of some long-forgotten vessel, and set up on the wind-swept promontory of Pillar Point, at the entrance to the great African river. More than once in the centuries which followed the erection of that column Portugal had put forth claim to suzerainty over the district in which it stood, but in every instance

her claims had been repudiated. France at the end of the eighteenth century, and England throughout the nineteenth century had refused them recognition. Ignoring the claims of Portugal, the Powers had agreed, tacitly, to consider the district of the Lower Congo as subject to no civilized state; and Europeans trafficked in it under a *régime* of absolute liberty, which allowed vile abuses to continue unchecked. In November 1882 the Portuguese claims were revived. The Geographical Society of Lisbon published a memorandum setting forth pretensions to territories along the seaboard, between 8° and 5° 12′ latitude, and along the lower waters of the Congo as far as Isange. At the same time the Portuguese Government opened negotiations with the English Cabinet, and in December Lord Granville, Foreign Secretary, proposed the basis of an agreement, by which England, while stipulating that the navigation of the Congo and the Zambesi should be free, was to recognize the sovereignty of Portugal over the territories on the West of Africa between parallels of 8° and 5° 12′ latitude, and that the rights and pretensions of all sorts held by Portugal over the West Coast of Africa between 5° of east longitude and 5° of west longitude were to be transferred to England. By this agreement England also recognized the sovereignty of Portugal over the Lower Congo.

Difficulties as to clauses in the treaty regarding tariffs and other questions were raised by Portugal, while a storm of opposition to the recognition of Portugal's claims on the Congo rose in the House of

Commons. Before the opposition the Cabinet displayed weakness of purpose, but on the 15th of March, 1883, a note of Lord Granville's was published, in which, while declaring that in the opinion of her Majesty's Government rivalry of competition, fatal to growing commerce, would be largely prevented by an arrangement between Great Britain and Portugal, founded on the principle of liberty and of equal advantages for all countries, it was, said the note, acknowledged that the proposal to extend the sovereignty of Portugal over the mouth of the Congo was a pure concession, not a recognition of historic right, and an intimation was given by England to Portugal that England would not stand by her agreement unless other countries approved of the treaty.

On this Portugal sought the support of France, but France refused it, and in the end a treaty of fifteen articles was drawn up and signed between Portugal and England in London on the 25th of February, 1884. This treaty recognized the claims of Portugal on the Congo, and left her free to impose what dues she liked on shipping entering the river; while, by the agreement to appoint a mixed commission of English and Portuguese delegates to draw up the rules concerning the Congo and other waterways comprised in the treaty, it gave England power of dominating the politics of the district.

Such an attempt on the part of the great maritime Power and her lesser ally to seize for themselves the mouth of the Congo aroused the indignation of the rest of Europe. France had been won

to King Leopold's side by his withdrawal from all claims on the portion of the Congo known afterwards as the French Congo, and by his concession to France of the right of pre-emption over the Belgian Congo. This concession, made first in October 1882, was confirmed formally in a letter addressed to the French President in April 1884. The support of Germany was gained for Belgium by King Leopold's withdrawal of all claims to the territories about Lake Tanganyika, which was then formed into a German protectorate, and has become the German East Africa of to-day.[1]

In April 1884 the French Government intimated to the Portuguese Government that France would not accept for her subjects the application of the clauses of Portugal's treaty with England. Holland and the United States followed France's example, and in the middle of April a note in identical terms was addressed by Germany to the Cabinets of Lisbon and London; and the Imperial Chancellor, Prince Bismarck, invited the French Government to join with Germany in the prevention of the recognition of the treaty.

On the 26th of June, 1884, Lord Granville announced in Parliament the abandonment of the treaty; and England's consent was given to the proposal of Germany that an International Congress should be summoned at Berlin. An attempt made by the English Cabinet to enter into a prior agreement with Germany as to the attitude to be taken and the course to be followed with regard to

[1] Lycops et Touchard, *Recueil Usuel de la Législation de l'état Independant du Congo*, I. 4, 5.

the Belgian International Society was waved aside by Germany; and the recognition of the territorial and sovereign rights of the International Association was left to be brought about by direct negotiations between Brussels and the various courts. In the dispatches exchanged between France and Germany preliminary to the summoning of the Congress, it was agreed to that all such questions as those relating to territories should be excluded from its purview.

The Congress of Berlin was a triumph for the Belgian King. It was presided over by Bismarck, who opened it on the 15th of November, 1884, with a speech expressing the belief that all the Governments invited shared the desire to associate the natives of Africa with civilization, by opening the interior of the continent to commerce, by furnishing to its inhabitants the means of instructing themselves, by encouraging missions and enterprises to propagate useful knowledge, and by preparing the suppression of slavery, and, above all, of the slave trade.

After this preamble, the President declared the main object of the Congress to be the facilitating of access to the interior of Africa by all commercial nations.

The programme of the Congress, he added, dealt only with the liberty of commerce in the basin of the Congo, and its mouth. In these districts there lay territories held by England, France, Germany and Portugal, as well as by the International Association. It was not until the sitting of the 23rd of February that the existence of the Inter-

national Association as an independent power was made known officially to the Congress. On that date there was read a letter addressed by Colonel Strauch, President of the Association, by the direction of King Leopold as its founder, to the President of the Congress, informing that assembly that all the Powers there represented, save one, had recognized the flag of the International Association as that of a friendly Government or State. The reading of this letter was a signal for a chorus of laudatory speeches on the part of the representatives of all the Powers. King Leopold, declared the French Ambassador, was a Prince surrounded by the respect of Europe; Sir Edward Malet, the English plenipotentiary, added England's praise, recalling how "during long years the King, dominated by a purely philanthropic idea, had spared nothing, neither personal efforts, nor pecuniary sacrifices, which could contribute to the realization of his object."

"Nevertheless," he continued, "the world in general regarded these efforts with an almost indifferent eye. Here and there, his Majesty aroused sympathy; it was in some degree rather a sympathy of condolence than encouragement. It was thought that the undertaking was beyond his power, that it was too great to succeed. We see now that the King was right, and that the idea which he pursued was not utopian. He has brought it to a good end, not without difficulties. But these very difficulties have made success all the more brilliant.

"In rendering this homage to his Majesty, of

recognizing all the obstacles he has overcome, we greet the new-born State with the greatest cordiality, and we express a sincere desire to see it flourish and increase beneath his ægis."

These expressions were echoes of the universal opinion. All the world united in admiration of King Leopold; the admiration of the King was nowhere greater than in England. Although England had held aloof officially from his organization, and the English Government had been willing to join Portugal in seizing the sovereignty of the mouth of the Congo, Englishmen were individually eager to support King Leopold in his adventure. English officers served willingly in his Congo force. English missionaries in Africa were loud in their praise of his work.[1]

The Belgian plenipotentiaries at the Congress joined with those of England in advocating regulations for the suppression of the slave trade, both within and without the Congo. "England," cried the French Ambassador at the sixth session of the Congress, "would make the act suppressing the slave trade applicable to the whole world;" and to quote the protocol of the proceedings: "The

[1] When preparing to leave for the Congo as King Leopold's agent in January 1884, Gordon wrote to Stanley: "We will, God helping, kill the slave traders in their haunts. No such efficacious means for cutting at the root of the slave trade ever was presented as that which God has, I trust, opened out to us as through the disinterestedness of his Majesty." Gordon, unfortunately, was called away by England from the Congo service, and it was another Englishman, Sir Francis de Winton, appointed by King Leopold Administrator-General of the Congo who, on the 19th of July, 1885, proclaimed the institution of the Independent State at Boma.

representative of Great Britain having replied that such was really the effect desired, the Baron de Courcel observed that the question took therefore an unforeseen extension, on which it seemed to the French plenipotentiaries that they could not resolve without reference to their Government." The Conference did not declare slavery illegal, but it prohibited the slave trade and bound the Powers represented at the Congress to use all the means at their command to put an end to that commerce and punish those engaged in it. One of the Belgian plenipotentiaries, the Count van der Straaten, appealed to the Congress to forbid the sale of alcohol to natives in the Congo; but the plenipotentiary of the Netherlands declared the sale of drink was, as was well known, established in commercial usage according to which spirits represented money, in a way, and were the principle instruments of exchange in the Congo Basin. These considerations prevailed and no regulation was made on the drink question.[1]

The regulations made at the Congress of Berlin were summed up in six chapters. The first declared the commerce of all nations free; the second prohibited the slave trade; the third proclaimed the territories within the Basin of the Congo neutral; the fourth was a navigation act giving free access to the flags of all nations in the Congo; the fifth was a similar act for the Niger; and the

[1] When the Congo State was established, King Leopold made decrees against the sale of alcohol to the natives, and against the introduction of absinthe or its sale to any person, foreign or native, in the State.

sixth laid down rules as to what would be regarded in the future as effective occupation of territories in the Congo.

In after years controversy raged around the interpretation of the first clause of the Act of Berlin; that which declared that the trade of all nations should enjoy complete freedom, and that no Power could concede monopoly or privilege of any sort in the Congo Basin in commercial matters. When King Leopold converted almost the whole of the vast Congo territory into one private estate, and reserved to himself and his concessionaires the right of collecting rubber there, it was contended he violated the Act of Berlin. The contention was wrong. The King, having annexed the Congo territories to the crown, asserted the rights of a property owner. With these rights the Conference of Berlin interfered in no way. The meaning of the clause declaring commerce free was clearly defined in a report adopted at the fourth sitting of the Congress, which said, "It refers exclusively to traffic; to the unlimited power of every one to sell and buy, to import and export products and manufactured articles; no privileged situation can be created under this head; the way remains open without any restrictions to free competition in the domain of commerce, but the obligations of local Governments do not go beyond this point."

The third clause of the Congress, which gave "free access to the flags of all nations," made it impossible to levy import dues on the Congo. This clause was not a wise one. By depriving the new state of raising a revenue to carry out the work

of colonizing, civilizing, and organizing the government, it flung the whole of the expenses on King Leopold's private purse. These expenses the King bore for very many years, giving each year a million francs (£40,000) from his private revenues to meet the Congo deficits, until at last he found himself absolutely penniless. It was then began the *régime* of rubber collection and forced labour. To the liberality of the Congress at the State's expense may, perhaps, be traced the origin of all King Leopold's exaction.

The Act of Berlin was signed on the 23rd of February. Throughout March Brussels was filled by deputations from Antwerp, and all the commercial and other centres of Belgium, carrying congratulation to King Leopold on the establishment of the new State, and the recognition of his work accorded by the Powers. The consent of the Belgian Parliament was given to his assumption of the sovereignty of the Free State of the Congo, and on the 1st of August, 1885, the King addressed a letter to each of the Powers notifying the fact that he had assumed it.

King Leopold found no difficulty in recruiting volunteers in the Belgian army to carry out his work in the Congo. For many years that work was necessarily one of exploration and the foundation of settlements. Missionaries advanced into the Congo side by side with the soldiers and civilians; these, like the soldiers and civilians, were recruited by the King himself, and their expenses were, in the greater part, paid out of the King's purse.

In 1876 King Leopold gained the assistance of

the White Fathers of Cardinal Lavigerie, who already laboured in the district on the borders of the Lake Tanganyika, from whence the first Belgian expeditions were sent into the Congo. The White Fathers entered what are now Congo territories in 1879, under the protection of the Belgian pioneers. It was not, however, until the end of the Arab War that the missionary settlements of the Belgians in the Congo were definitely established, and erected into vicariates, and the evangelizing of the State placed solely in the hands of Belgian missionaries.

Eight years passed before King Leopold was able to strike the decisive blow against the slave traders planned with Gordon in 1884. In these years the boundaries of the State were fixed, its territories explored, its government set up, its roadways made, its railways planned, and its river navigation arranged. The posts of the State were gradually extended and strengthened in order to close the country as far as possible against the Arab traders. Entrenched camps were established on the great affluents of the Congo for the same purpose. Constant danger remained of invasion by the Soudanese Arabs from the Bahr-el-Gazal country, and the Arabs of Zanzibar were still so powerful in the land that within the wide Kasongo and Manyama district the Government had no control except such as it obtained by precarious and often illusionary alliances with the Arab chieftains, who were in constant communication with Zanzibar.

At length Europe was aroused. Cardinal Lavigerie, commissioned by Pope Leo XIII, travelled from capital to capital preaching a crusade against

the slave trade. Everywhere he met with success. In every country of Europe societies were formed to aid the work he advocated. The Belgian Anti-slavery society was the first of these. That society sent two expeditions to Africa which took a noble and useful part in the war against the slave traders. In England and Germany public meetings were held to call for instant action; and England, recognizing it as fitting that the formal initiative should come from King Leopold, to whom all that was done for the civilization of Central Africa was in a great part due, addressed herself to him and invited him to summon the Congress. "The change which has occurred in the political condition on the African Coast," said the English Minister at Brussels, addressing the Belgian Cabinet, "calls to-day for common action on the part of the Powers responsible for the control of the coast. That action should tend to close all foreign slave markets, and should result in putting down slave-hunting in the interior.

"The great work undertaken by the King of the Belgians in the constitution of the Congo State, and the lively interest taken by his Majesty in all questions affecting the welfare of the African race, leads Her Majesty's Government to hope that Belgium will be disposed to take the initiative in inviting the Powers to meet in Conference at Brussels in order to consider the best means of obtaining the gradual suppression of the slave trade on the Continent of Africa, and the immediate closing of all the outside markets which the slave trade continues to supply."

Acting on this invitation King Leopold summoned a Congress, which met in Brussels on the 18th of November, 1889, to decide upon a course of action calculated to put an end to the crimes and devastation wrought by the African slave trade, and to protect effectively the native population in Africa.

At the Congress measures were prescribed for the suppression of the slave trade in the strongholds of the man-hunters, on the caravan routes, on the coast, by sea, and, finally, in the countries for which the slaves were destined, on great Oriental slave markets.

To facilitate the work, the clause of the Act of Berlin regarding the free entry of goods was modified and permission given to levy import duties, uniform throughout the Congo, not exceeding a maximum of 10 per cent. of the value of the imported goods.

On the passing of this measure the English Minister, Lord Vivian, said—

"As to the question whether this modification is opportune, the fact must not be lost sight of that the Berlin Conference never intended to fix unalterably the economic system of the Free State, which, as was already then foreseen, would undergo radical modifications under the influence of progress, or to establish for an indefinite period regulations which might hinder, check, and even arrest its development. Provision was wisely made for the probability of future changes, which would require a certain latitude in economic matters in order to secure their easy realization. . . .

"The moment has now come when the marvellous progress made by the infant State is creating fresh needs, when it would be only in accordance with wisdom and foresight to revise an economic system primarily adapted to a creative and transitional period.

"Can we blame the infant State for a progress which by its rapidity has surpassed the most optimistic forecast? Can we hinder and arrest this progress in refusing her the means necessary for her development? Can we condemn the Sovereign, who has already made such sacrifices to support for an indefinite period a burthen which daily becomes heavier, and at the same time impose upon him new and heavy expenses necessitated by the suppression of the slave trade?

"We are convinced there will be but one answer to these questions."

The power to levy import dues on the Congo enabled King Leopold to obtain a loan of twenty-five million francs (one million sterling) for the Congo State from the Belgian Government, £200,000 of this sum being advanced at once, which, added to the sum given to the State by the King, formed a sufficient sum to carry the war to a successful conclusion. The Arabs whom King Leopold attacked in the Congo were no scattered band of slave traders. They were men of the same race as those who triumphantly overran the Soudan, and their aims were the same. They were the advance guard of Islam, and their intention was to found a Mohammedan empire in the Congo such as had been founded by the Khalifa in the Soudan.

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THE MISSION AT MOANDA

Realizing what was at stake, knowing their opponents determined to wipe them out of existence, the Mohammedans fought to the bitter end, returning again and again to the attack, even when there was no hope of success. An almost incredibly large loss of life was the result. The losses of the Congo army of King Leopold, and the natives who fought as allies with it, was great; that of the Arabs, immensely greater, was estimated at seventy thousand men.[1]

The first encounter with the Arabs took place in 1890. The final victory was gained over them by Dhanis at Kabambary on the 25th of January, 1894.

The first murmur in England against the actions of the Belgians was heard on the morrow of this successful war. In his history of the war Dr. Hinde stated that one of the Congolese tribes fighting on the side of the Belgians devoured the bodies of enemies they had slain. Dr. Hinde also stated that none of the native soldiers in the regular employment of the Congo were cannibals; and added, moreover, that when the Belgian commander, Dhanis, learned of the cannibal feast of a tribe fighting with his army, he immediately broke off all relation with that tribe. Nevertheless, widespread horror was expressed at the thought that the Belgians had allowed cannibals to fight with them; and the native army of the Congo, to which cannibalism was never traced, in which such a practice would never have been for a moment tolerated, was thenceforth called by those who

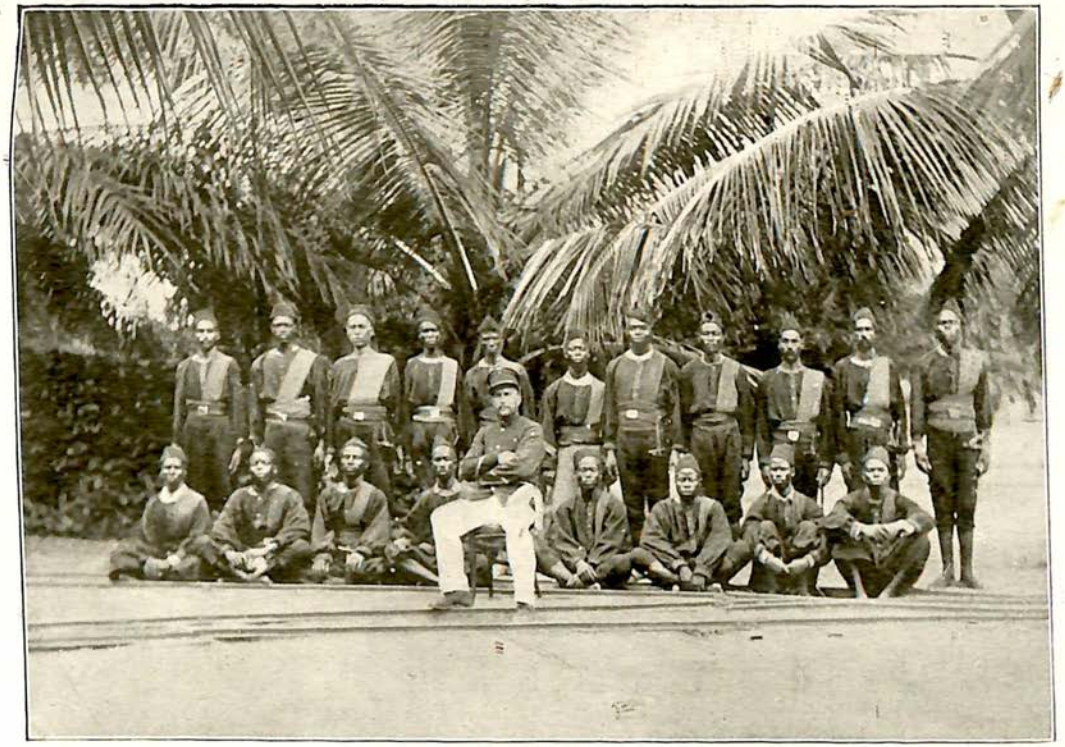
[1] Hinde, *History of the Arab War.*

were the enemies of his State, King Leopold's Cannibal Army.

A decree made on the 12th of July, 1885, invested all the vacant land in the Congo in the State.[1]

The decree, similar to an article of the French and Belgian Civil Codes, "Property without owners belongs to the Public Domain," attracted no attention from the public. During the first five years of the State's existence it was not enforced; in these years individuals and commercial companies were encouraged to establish themselves in the Congo. In 1901, when financial needs pressed heavy on the State, and the value of ivory and rubber in the Upper Congo began to be revealed, a suggestion was made by Coquilhat that the decree of 1885 should be acted upon to preserve these riches for the State. Coquilhat's suggestion was adopted and a decree was made on the 21st of September, 1891, and communicated by a circular to the agents in the Congo, directing them to take urgent and necessary measures to maintain at the disposal of the State the products of the domain, notably those of ivory and rubber. "This," says Père Vermoesche, in *La Question Congolaise*, "was the *coup de grâce* given to a very fructuous commerce of the Belgian Companies, notably of the Compagnie Commercial du Haut Congo." A violent agitation against the decree at once arose. The Governor-General of the Congo resigned; and there were heated debates in the Belgian Parliament, which resulted in a compromise on the basis of

[1] Nul n'a le droit d'occuper sans titres des terres vacantes, ni de déposséder les indigènes des terres qu'ils occupent; les terres vacantes doivent être considérées comme appartenant à l'État. The State, of course, meant the Sovereign.



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THE POLICE CORPS AT BOMA

a free zone for traders, conceded by a decree of the 30th of October, 1892. This was the commencement of the famous Leopoldian System.

Under this decree the State was divided into three parts, one that of the free zone, in which, on the payment of certain royalties to the State, natives and non-natives were permitted to collect rubber. The second was the private domain in which the State preserved for itself the monopoly of the collection of rubber, and the third region was one for the moment reserved, for which laws were to be made at a future period. In fact, this third district was assimilated to the second. In the greater part of these two zones the collection of rubber was made by the State itself, directly; in the remaining part it was made by concessionary societies in which the State had the greater number of shares.

The rubber was collected for the State by natives, who, instead of being obliged to pay a monetary tax, were constrained to work each month forty hours for the State.[1] Under this system immense profits were gained by the King. Yearly budgets were published during King Leopold's reign over the Congo, but no actual balance-sheet of the State's income and expenditure was shown. In 1905, Belgian statisticians, unfriendly to the State, published calculations to show the actual income was far in excess of that estimated in the budget. The budget for 1904

[1] Natives employed in the stations, at the missions, and even by private persons were exempted from this tax. All the natives whom a white man had regularly in his employment were also exempt. Their employers paid taxes in cash for them.

showed a gross product from the exploitation of the Domain of the State and the properties in Europe owned by the Congo to be £763,000, and the net product to be £502,080. The statistics estimated that the real product was £1,061,200. For 1905 the budget estimated a gross product of £504,000, while the statisticians concluded that the net product was £1,066,880.

Besides the income of the State there was another huge income received every year from the Congo; that from the territories cut out of the Domain of the State and the reserved zone to form a Domain of the Crown, the private property of the Sovereign, of the finances of which no return was made.[1]

The moment the Congo was practically closed to outsiders, a great cry against King Leopold's Government rose in England. It continued until at the close of his reign the King transferred the Congo sovereignty to Belgium. Even then the outcry was but little diminished. King Leopold was not only accused of having violated the Act of Berlin, he was accused of committing by his agents in the Congo, acts unspeakably atrocious upon the natives, who, it was declared, were forced, beneath the lash, to spend their lives in gathering rubber; murder and mutilation being the meed of those that faltered at the task. Societies and newspapers were specially founded to denounce the Congo atrocities. Those who while his Congo enter-

[1] From a statement made in the Chamber by M. de Smet de Nayer when Premier, it was calculated this domain produced £3,600,000 in fifteen years.

prise entailed financial losses on King Leopold could find no words sufficiently eulogistic to apply to him, the moment that enterprise brought monetary profit, found no words sufficiently black in which to paint him. The outcry outside found an echo in Parliament. The traders whom King Leopold prevented from dealing as was their wont in the Congo, joined the members of Missionary Societies, indignant at seeing work of evangelization of the Congo handed over to Catholics, and ready to impute any evil to Popish priests who taught the natives a language the English missionaries did not understand.

Of all those who attacked King Leopold's system in the Congo, the missionaries were the most vehement. They collected innumerable tales of atrocities committed by the officials of the Belgian King. The fact that the stories of atrocities repeated by them were proved in every instance to be either grossly exaggerated or entirely false, did not lessen the outcry or the venom of the missionaries. The missionaries did not fabricate the stories they told. They simply repeated every accusation they could gather from the natives, regardless of the fact that the natives of the Congo lie at the slightest provocation, and are always ready to trump up tales to gratify their hearers or benefit themselves.

In the first period of the State's existence, the Protestant missionaries were encouraged by the King to establish themselves in it. They received from him many marks of his favour. It is related that at the moment of concluding with King

Leopold the arrangements of his departure for the Congo, as Administrator, General Gordon said to the King, "We have forgotten the principal thing; it seems to me it is the missionaries"; and that King Leopold replied, "Oh no, we have thought of that, the Association gives its aid and protection to all the missionaries; moreover, it has given subsidies to the Bible Society and to the Baptists." To which Gordon replied, "That is good, but send us Romans, many Romans." [1]

When the Protestant missionaries began their campaign against the Congo State the State retaliated by withdrawing its support from them; and cries of bigotry were added to those of cruelty.

While Protestants were making these accusations against King Leopold in England, Catholics in Belgium were accusing him of making his Congo State too liberal, and of allowing the officials to show anti-Catholic zeal. According to Père Vermeersch, "The Congolese work was presented as a neutral work, hence it could only excite the suspicions of the Catholics and alienate the sympathies which it would be most precious to conquer."

Certainly, many of those who were engaged as Congo officials were indifferent, if not hostile to religion; and the Grand Orient of Belgium was able in its report of the 5th of September, 1900, to announce the establishment of a Masonic Lodge in the Congo "in order to fight against the degrading

[1] *La Revue Générale* (1885), p. 116.

work of the missionaries." The report of the Grand Orient stated that there were many Belgian Free Masons who had gone to the Congo, and remained there, for longer or shorter periods, or definitely, either to fulfil official functions there, military, judicial or administrative, or to exercise liberal professions.[1]

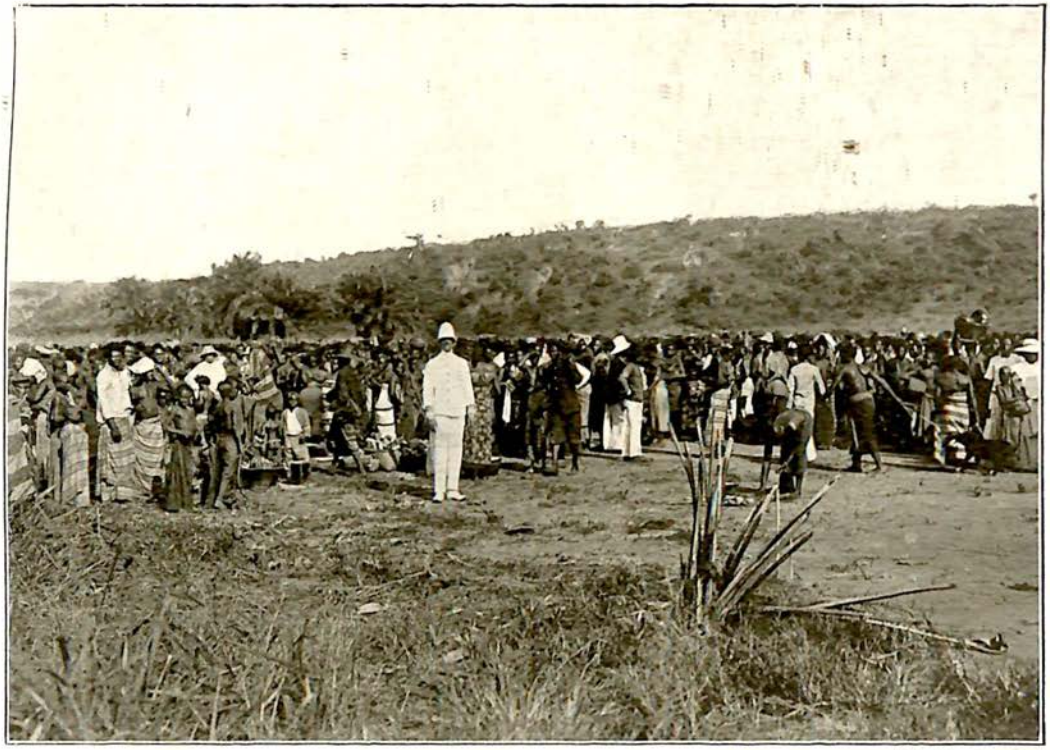
The traders and the missionaries who attacked the Leopoldian *régime* in the Congo, were joined in their outcries by English politicians who desired to see the Cape joined to Cairo, and wished to have the Belgian obstacle swept out of England's way. The agitation against the Independent State, skilfully organized, moved the English Government to issue on the 18th of August, 1903, a note to the Powers, setting forth charges that the object of the administration of the Congo was not so much the care and improvement of the natives, as the collection of revenue; that this object was pursued by a system of forced labour, different only in name from slavery; that the demands on each village were exacted with a strictness which constantly degenerated into great cruelty; that the men composing the armed force of the State were in many cases recruited from the most warlike and savage tribes, who not unfrequently terrorized over their own officers, and maltreated the natives without regard to discipline or fear of punishment.

To these charges there was joined in the note the allegation that the regulations regarding the collection of the products of the Domain land constituted State monopolies, contrary to the stipu-

[1] Père Vermeersch, *La Question Congolaise*, p. 80.

lation of the Act of Berlin, and the English Government suggested that the question, either wholly or in part, might be made the subject of a reference to the Tribunal at The Hague. No communication was made public of the replies received by the English Government to this note, but it was understood that the only one of the Powers who agreed to the suggestion that an inquiry was desirable was Turkey, then ruled over by Abdul-Hamid.

The issue of the English note was followed by the publication of a report of the English Consul, Mr. Roger Casement, of a journey undertaken by him in the Upper Congo during two and a half months, in June, July, and September 1903. The Consul travelled on a steamer belonging to an English Missionary Society. His coming was hailed as a portent that the days of forced labour were at an end. Belgian agents passing along the river in their canoe were greeted on encountering the steamer with the English Consul, by shouts from the natives crowded on the river-bank: "Your violence is over, the English will alone remain. You others will die"; and the missionary who was with the English representative at the time, explained the shouts by saying in his evidence before a Court of Inquiry, held to investigate a pretended case of atrocity: "The Consul was here at the time, and the people were much excited and evidently thought themselves on top. The people had got into their heads this idea that the rubber-gathering was finished, in consequence, I suppose, of the Consul's visit." Commenting on the natives'



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A NATIVE MARKET AT LUSAMBO

attitude, Major Harrison wrote in the *Journal of Commerce* of the 25th of July, 1904: "To show the effect of Mr. Casement travelling on the mission-boat, I found long before I struck the Congo, the general native impression was that if they made out a bad enough case the English would take the country, and the inhabitants seemed quite disappointed when they found out that I was not part of the same show, collecting evidence from the Nile. I fear many people, on hearing that the native tribes are anxious to come under British control, fondly imagine it to be through love of our kind and liberal treatment. Let me quote our Sierra Leone soldiers' views and advice to their Congo brethren. They say, 'When you boys become Englishmen, no white man call native d—— fool; if he do, judge fine him two pounds. If white man kick or strike black man, he get fined five pounds, or go to prison. Sierra Leone boy, he big man; no do much work.'"

Under the Leopoldian system, for the forced labour the State exacted from them in lieu of taxation, the natives were paid wages at the current rate, for which a sum of about £120,000 a year was set aside in the Budget. The contention of King Leopold and his supporters was that a labour tax was more equitable, and in no way harder than a money tax which obliged the natives to labour to earn money with which to pay the tax. The one charge of atrocity in which names and places enabling it to be identified was given in Mr. Casement's report, was that of the mutilation of a native boy named Epondo. A judicial inquiry

held subsequently into the case proved the whole story to be fabricated.

True or false tales of the Congo atrocities continued to be told. In order that the truth might be brought to light, King Leopold by decree, on the 23rd of July, 1904, named a Commission of Inquiry into the alleged acts of ill-treatment of natives either by private individuals or by the agents of the State. The first article of this decree laid down that the inquiry was to be carried out in conformity with the instructions of the Congo Secretary of State.

This article did not satisfy the English Government, and the British Minister at Brussels was charged to request the Government of the Congo to modify it. England's request was acceded to, and the Commission was invested with unlimited power to judge the facts on the spot, and to give such publicity to its sittings as it considered useful for the discovery of the truth.

The Inquiry Commission was composed of three jurisconsults, a Belgian, an Italian, and a Swiss. The inquiry, which they carried out in every portion of the rubber-bearing districts of the Congo, lasted from the 1st of October, 1894, to the 26th of January, 1905.

The report of the Commission was published on the 5th of November, 1905. Its impartiality was unquestionable, the members of the Commission had sought diligently for abuses; all they discovered they set down without attenuation. They found many things to criticize in the action of the Concessionary Companies. They suggested an amend-

ment of the law relating to the lands occupied by the natives, by which, in addition to their cultivated fields, they would have the free use of large districts surrounding their villages, with the right of freely collecting and dealing in the rubber and other products of these districts. They pointed to instances of harsh application of the labour tax, but approved of the tax itself. "Native labour is necessary for commerce in the Congo," they declared, and, "since the natives of the Congo are unwilling and unaccustomed to labour, they must be constrained to it, and the only means of constraining them to work is the establishment of a labour tax or *corvée*."

The publication of the report of the Commission was followed by the appointment of a committee to draw up measures of reform on the lines indicated by the Commission. The reforms indicated were decreed, and instructions were given to the officials in the Congo to carry them out, thoroughly.

None of these acts disarmed the adversaries of the State; those who wished to obtain for themselves the rich product of the Congo in return for beads, or cloth, or gin, bartered with the natives, were determined to continue their outcry as long as the Belgian King preserved the produce of the State. As has been shown, King Leopold set up his standard in the Congo for the express purpose of freeing the immense number "of perfectly innocent beings, who, brutally reduced to captivity, are condemned" *en masse* "to penal servitude for life."[1] The evil the King of the Belgians declared

[1] See *ante*, p. 252.

he would suppress in 1876, he, as Sovereign of the Congo, was accused, thirty years later, not only of permitting, but of himself committing. The opponents of the Leopoldian system described the condition of the natives as that of starving slaves lash-driven to unending toil.

All Englishmen did not accept this description as true. While there were immense crowds in England befouling their mouths with abuse of King Leopold, there were here and there in the country men who burthened the air with incense burnt in that Sovereign's honour. In instances, the praise seemed as exaggerated as the abuse, but the crowds abused on hearsay evidence, while the men who swung the censers had travelled independently in the Congo, and told of what they themselves had seen. They described the condition of the natives as one of perfect contentment in prosperous and pleasant surroundings. In his *Journal of a Tour in the Congo Free State,* Mr. Dorman says: "We can dismiss at once the idea that the native is oppressed by military despotism, for the posts are isolated, and the number of troops in them is merely sufficient to guard property and stores, that is to say, to fulfil the duties of policemen in England. At any moment the thousands of natives who live in or near the posts, could overwhelm these small forces long before help could arrive from the next Government Station, in many cases a week's journey distant. The fact that they do not do so is, at least, negative evidence that the white men do not illtreat the people. There is, however, much positive evidence

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!BULLOCK WAGGON AT KASONGO

that the native has not only a great respect, but also an affection for his new rulers; and it is not difficult to understand the reason, when we compare his fate before the advent of the Europeans with his condition at present.

"In each village was a chief, or chiefs, freemen or slaves who passed their lives hunting and fighting other tribes. The sole property of the chiefs and freemen were their huts, canoes and slaves, and the rude instruments they used in war and hunting. The unfortunate slaves were bought and sold, or captured in war, and were often killed and eaten. One slave was worth so many goats, lances or knives, and one large canoe would buy several women. Legislation rested with the chiefs, and trial by ordeal was common, but always so arranged that the result could be controlled by the judge. This is not the place, however, to describe these interesting if horrible practices.

"Now, at present the people are rich, beyond the wildest dreams of their ancestors, for the value of the property of the great chiefs has greatly increased since they have dealt with Europeans. Again, the chief of a small village, containing 1,000 men, supplies 1,000 kilogrammes of rubber to the State each month, for fifty centimes a kilogramme. To collect this amount takes two or three days; each year, therefore, the village receives £240 for collecting a substance of no value at all to the natives, whose daily routine, in the meanwhile, is scarcely affected at all. . . . There is, however, another force acting which we should hardly expect would affect the mind of

a savage. He is greatly influenced by a desire to ascend the social ladder, at the summit of which is, of course, the white man, and any one having direct dealings with him at once knows himself to be superior to the naked cannibal in the forest. . . . So also the soldiers and the workers in the plantations, who come into daily contact with the officials. All the most intelligent and ambitious natives are thus drawn away from their primitive condition of life, and become attached to their master, who gives them cloth to wear and beads to beautify themselves. . . . It daily becomes more and more obvious that the white man is greatly respected, and that his word is absolutely trusted. What he says is true, and what he promises he does. . . . It is, indeed, the respect caused by moral not by physical force which enables a few Europeans to govern this great country with success." [1]

According to the statement of the Congo Government its expenses exceeded its income. These expenses in the last years of the Leopoldian *régime* amounted to over £1,120,000 a year. The figures given in the Government reports show the work achieved under King Leopold's rule in the Congo. In 1907, Boma, the capital of the State, had 246

[1] During the controversy on the Leopoldian *régime*, the Congo State published an immense number of extracts from the books and reports of Englishmen, officers of the English army, Government officials, Protestant missionaries, travellers, engineers, etc., each fully as eulogistic as that quoted here. The opponents of the State on their side published equally immense numbers of pamphlets, full of blood-curdling tales of atrocities, and atrocious photographs of legless and armless natives alleged to have been mutilated by King Leopold's agents.

European dwellings, a Government Palace, Catholic and Protestant churches, a Palace of Justice, seven administrative departments, a Red Cross Hospital for white men and blacks, a school colony, a port visited regularly by Belgian, English, French, and German liners, Portuguese vessels connecting it with the Angola line, a railway terminus, a tramway, waterworks, a hydrographic service, and a telegraphic service which connected it with the heart of the continent. From Boma the State organization extended to 296 State posts, spread over all the Congo, connected with each other by roads, and occupied by 1,427 administrative agents; from it there stretched a network of telegraphic lines covering 1,000 miles; roads for animal traction, constructed over many hundreds of miles, in addition to the great waterway on which 102 steamboats plied. In addition to the posts of the State, there were then in the Congo 516 commercial establishments, of which 246 were in the Upper Congo; 104 fixed posts of missions, and 328 farm-chapels. The number of native Christians in the State was far over 100,000 (the Catholics, alone, numbered 72,382 in 1905). There were 16,136 native soldiers in the Public Force, with 264 non-commissioned officers, and 158 officers. The roll of the regular workmen of the State, who, like the soldiers and the Christians, were already lifted above the savage state, was so great that there were often no less than three thousand men employed on the work of the port and station of Leopoldville alone; the crews of the vessels of the State numbered 1,050 men. There were

2,734 marriages of natives registered in 1904, conferring, by the fact of their registration, the full rights of citizenship, and constituting families from which polygamy was excluded.

In 1906, when the English outcry and that of the Belgian Socialists against the Congo Government was at its height, King Leopold flung defiance in the face of the world, in the form of a letter addressed to his Congo Secretaries of State; in it he declared: "The whole responsibility, as all the burthen, was left to me of founding a regular Government by private initiative, without a tie to any mother-country, and in surroundings where it was considered impracticable. . . . Now, there can be no right more legitimate and more respectable than the right of an author to his own proper work, the fruit of his labour. . . .

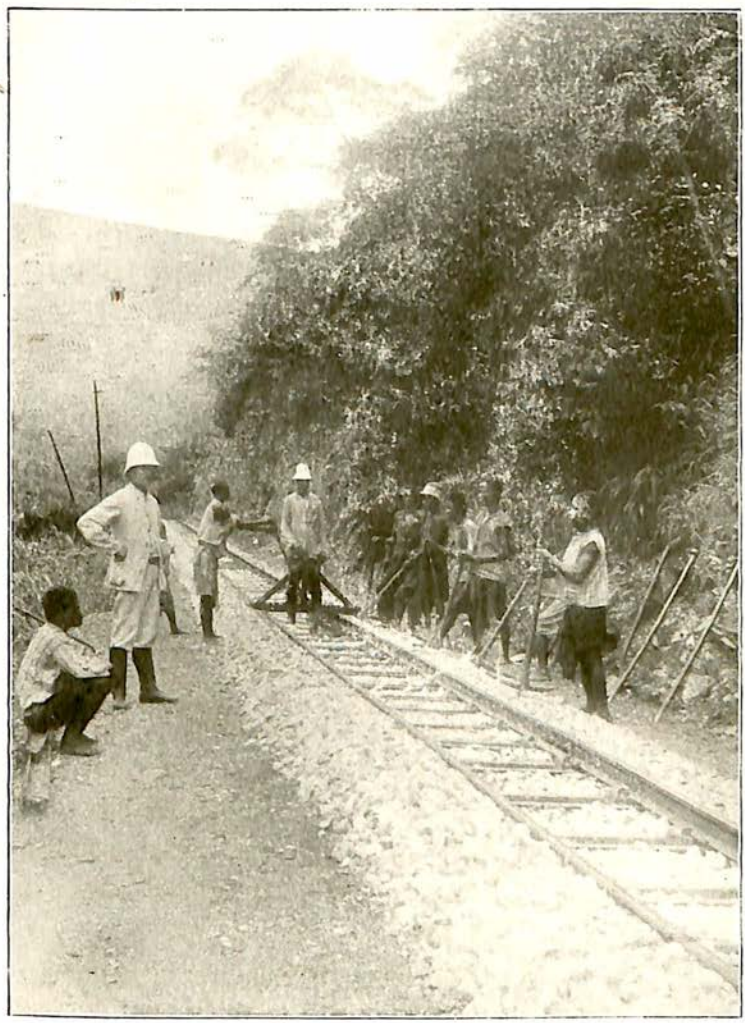
"My rights on the Congo are indivisible; they are the product of my labours and my expenditure; it is they and they alone which have made my legacy to Belgium possible and legitimate; it is my duty to proclaim these rights boldly, for Belgium has no rights in the Congo apart from those that come to her from me.

"The adversaries of the Congo push for an immediate annexation.

"These personages hope beyond doubt to capsize the work and thereby gather rich wreckage.

"If you are interrogated as to my intentions, reply: I consider myself morally bound to inform the country, when the moment comes, to examine the question of annexation. I have nothing to say for the present."

These words were daring, but King Leopold



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RAILWAY BUILDING ON THE CATARACTS LINE

dared all. His ambition was for his country, for the Crown, not personally for himself. His desire was to give to Belgium a strong army, a navy and a mercantile marine, which would make her formidable amongst armed nations. "He wants money, enormous sums of money, but he desires to die without a penny," said the great Belgian statesman, M. Beernaert, who was Prime Minister when Belgium consented to the King's assumption of the Congo Sovereignty, in a conversation some years before King Leopold's death.[1] M. Beernaert added, "It was I who enabled the King to become an autocrat. I regret I did so; no man should have unlimited power." The views the venerable statesman held are those of Belgian parliamentarians, loyal to the constitutional monarchy but opposed to any increase in the power of the Crown; distrustful of the acts of one who sought to make and keep their country great by setting up an autocracy. In the end, it was England, aided by France, that defeated King Leopold's attempts to create a navy, or form the nucleus of one in a mercantile marine.

The baffling of King Leopold's plans regarding the country's armed forces did not cause him to modify his Congo *régime*. By it he continued to gain immense sums of money. He spent most of what he gained as a King should. In the royal park of Terveuren, seven miles distant from Brussels, he built a magnificent museum, and laid the foundation of a colonial school, in which Belgians and natives of every country were to be instructed in all that is useful to be known by

[1] The conversation here reported took place between M. Beernaert and the author, in 1907.

colonists and those who direct, govern and educate the inhabitants of savage lands. He made new suburbs at Brussels, in the north-east; through the great forest of Terveuren he caused a wide avenue seven miles long to be built, leading to the gate of his Colonial Museum. At the commencement of that avenue at the Cinquantenaire Museum at Brussels, he built a glorious Arch of Triumph. He practically rebuilt the suburb of Laeken in which the royal château stands; he remodelled and enlarged the château, built on the outskirts of its grounds Chinese and Japanese pavilions filled with art treasures of the Eastern countries in which he successfully engaged Belgian industry, and invested much of the money gained in the Congo. He rebuilt the Palace of Brussels, and made it one of the finest of Europe. He built much and embellished much at Ostend.

All King Leopold's Congo revenues were not spent on these works. Much of them went in ways which caused scandal to busy itself with the King's name.

Decrying his great works as useless expenditure, and attacking him on his weak points, Belgian Socialists joined English Radicals in demanding that the Congo system should be changed, and its revenues wrested from King Leopold. By these parties the question of the annexation of the Congo by Belgium was forced on the Belgian Parliament. The two Royal foundations, the National Domain and the Foundation of the Crown, were attacked on all sides. Supporters of the Government joined with the Liberals and Socialists in denouncing them. Their legal recognition, it

was declared, would make the King of the Belgians independent of Parliament. King Leopold already proved himself sufficiently an autocrat when his power rested almost solely on his own strong personality. King Leopold, the unquestionable master of hundreds of millions, could not be tolerated as a ruler by a free people. Who could tell what the acts would be of the successor to his crown and estates? The report of the Secretaries of State of the Congo, which accompanied the King's letter, described the National Domain as amounting to something less than two-sixths of the territories of the State. One of the new decrees invested in the Domain proprietorship of all the mines and properties worked and administered by the State as well as the non-conceded mines. The royal decree ordained that part of the revenues of this Domain were to be devoted to the needs of the Congo Government; part of them to specified public works, while no part of these revenues were to be used for purposes other than those of "Public Utility."

The private Domain reserved by the King, "The Foundation of the Crown," was admitted to contain 156,800 square miles out of 1,418,757 miles which the State contained; and a population of three and a half million native inhabitants of the State. Its income in 1906 was £260,000. The natives who lived on the Foundation of the Crown were obliged to work in payment of the labour tax in the same manner as the natives in the other parts of the country; but the cost of their labour was repaid to the State from the King's privy purse. The Foundation of the Crown had valuable mines

and great forest lands. The committee of the Belgian Government appointed to examine into the Congo question reported: "It is the intention of the creator of the Foundation of the Crown to charge properties conferred on the Sovereign in his private capacity for a purely disinterested and patriotic object, with the execution of works of national utility. The Foundation is of no personal advantage to its creator." Notwithstanding these statements of royal disinterestedness, the opposition to the two foundations continued unlessened, and in the end King Leopold consented to annul the foundations; Belgium annexed the Congo, and there was created a special fund of £2,000,000 to be devoted to such objects as the King should decree. In the budget of 1909 there was allotted a credit of £152,000 as the first instalment of this fund, which by the King's decree was to have been spent as follows: On the construction at Terveuren of the École Mondiale and similar works, £88,080; subsidies for Belgian missions in the Belgian Congo, £20,000; creation of sanatoria on the borders of the Mediterranean to enable lodgings to be offered to agents or ex-agents of the Colonial Administration in the Colony, £120,000.[1]

[1] The surrender by King Leopold II of his foundations for specific purposes was, like the surrender of his English pension by King Leopold I, more apparent than real. In place of the foundations in the Congo, he made a foundation in the Duchy of Coburg, which he endowed with money gained in the Congo, for the purposes for which the Domains in the Congo had been established. This, called the foundation of Niederfullbach, was to have been administered by the trustees, but the trustees, bowing before a hostile ruling of the Belgian Courts, made after the King's death, surrendered its funds to the Belgian Government, and the foundation ceased to exist.

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AUGUSTE BEERNAERT

This was the end of the Leopoldian *régime* in the Congo; but not as yet the end of Belgium's differences with England.

Up to the moment of the fall of the Second Empire, when Germany looked with suspicion on Belgium, and Belgium regarded Germany with little friendship, Belgium considered England her greatest support in trade, the staunchest defender of her liberty. Gradually this feeling was changed, partly by German skill, partly because of England's attitude over the Congo question. Rivalry between Antwerp and Liverpool is no more inevitable than rivalry between the Belgian and German ports. Such rivalry exists, but with regard to Germany no bitterness results from it. The Germans have profited by the advance of Antwerp. Its quay-sides are filled by their warehouses, its business streets are lined by their banks and shops. Incidentally, Germany's trade has brought regiments of German clerks and workmen, who are also trained soldiers, within the city fortifications at Antwerp. Belgium's trade with Germany is greater to-day than her trade with England. Belgium feels herself driven towards Germany, and when the Belgian military system was reorganized in 1909, by the law which required each family to furnish one son for military service, so as to raise the effective strength of the army to 188,000 men, it was not France or Germany, but England, the ancient friend, that politicians hinted at as a possible foe against whom Belgium should be armed. A leading member of the Belgian Cabinet, asked at the moment the new army law was passed of what advantage increased military

strength would be to Belgium, answered with another question: "Would England speak as she does over this Congo question if we had now such an army to put into the field?" The idea of Belgium threatening England may be smiled at, yet Belgium's friendship is worth having. Germany recognizes this, and is wishful of the closest union with Belgium.

The policy of Germany is to bring both Belgium and Holland into union with the Empire. Neither Holland nor Belgium would dream for a moment of submitting to Prussia's overlordship, but it is possible that so close a friendship might be created by trade and other means that in a moment of stress neutrality would be forgotten and friendship turned into alliance. The lesson of the Dutch plan for the fortification of Flushing is not to be overlooked, neither is the league for the advancement of their common interests which exists between Holland and Belgium to be ignored.

The sore feeling in Belgium, caused by the outcries against the Congo, did not cease on the disappearance of the Leopoldian *régime*, for, although all was changed in the Congo Administration, the English outcries against Belgian brutality continued.

In 1909 Prince Albert, then heir to the Belgian throne, now King Albert of Belgium, and the Colonial Minister, M. Renkin, traversed the Congo, following different routes, the Prince entering the State from the east, the Minister from the west coast. On his return the Colonial Minister presented the first Congo budget to the Chamber, and with it a report which announced the immediate

suppression of forced labour, the introduction of money taxes and the abolition of taxation in kind, the payment in money of the natives, permission to the natives to trade freely, the opening of a great district of the Congo to free trade, and the promise of the opening of the remaining districts of the country to free trade in a like manner in a short period, on given dates.

The Belgians having taken over the Congo were determined to convince Europe that their rule over it would be one of justice and humanity. They were determined that all those who led public opinion in England should be fully enlightened as to their actions and their intentions. Leading newspapers in England were still full of columns of denunciations of the Congo atrocities, and of the Congo Administration, but no English journal of any importance could be found to open its columns to those who defended the Congo. To overcome the situation thus created, Belgians, moved only by patriotism, people of high rank and great wealth, who had no monetary interests in the Congo, who had no personal interests in politics and no connection with the court, caused the report of the Colonial Minister and the various official statements laid before the Belgian Parliament to be translated and circulated freely in England, copies being sent to every leading politician, to every member of each House of Parliament, to every prominent clergyman, to every well-known journalist, and to every barrister whose name appeared in the Law List. After the circulation of these documents a great meeting to denounce the Congo atrocities was held at the Albert Hall,

at which all the old stories of the Congo atrocities and misgovernment were repeated, and nothing told of the new reforms. Those in England who had denounced and distrusted King Leopold had not yet reconciled themselves to placing confidence in the promises of the Belgian Parliament and people.

The Congo budget for 1911 and the statements which accompanied it showed that the Belgian engagements were kept. The opening up of the country to free trade was continued; facilities were given to all comers to obtain ground for factories, and to carry on commerce freely with the natives; and equal facilities were given to Catholic and Protestant missionaries to obtain land for their missions and carry on their evangelizing work.

The budget for 1911 anticipated a deficit of several millions. The returns for 1912 showed that in the preceding year, although costly reforms had been introduced, and the old means of getting wealth by forced labour of the natives abolished, instead of a deficit, there was a surplus of several millions; while the registration of companies in the Congo published in the *Moniteur* proved that foreigners as well as Belgians were forward in taking advantage of the new regulations.

English capital was already largely invested in the Katanga district. In 1912 much German capital was introduced into the Congo, large German companies being registered as obtaining trading concessions. It would be premature to say that the English opponents of the Belgian rulé in the Congo have laid down their arms, and

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BRUSSELS ; THE TRIUMPHAL ARCH, ERECTED BY KING LEOPOLD II, AT THE CINQUANTENAIRE PALACE

it would be ridiculous to pretend that Belgium's aim in that State is purely philanthropic; but it is clear that while Belgium intends to advantage herself in Africa, she also intends to ameliorate the lot of the natives. In 1912 the Rev. Mr. Harris, Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society, returned to England from the Congo, reported that, while much yet remained to be done, much had already been done in the Belgian Colony towards improving the natives' lot, and declared that for the future there was good hope.

This was the beginning of the end. The English Consular reports were changed in their tone. It is not suggested that English consuls ever failed in fulfilling the high duties confided to them; but consuls are human beings, some can see far, some less far: those who represent England in the Congo at the present time seem to be men who see the farthest, and judge most soundly. We may be certain that none of them ever dreamt of white-washing King Leopold II. Consuls preparing reports on the Congo at the present time do not pause to think of the dead Sovereign and his vanished *régime*. Yet, their reports elucidate King Leopold's action. He was attacked violently for imposing what was called hard labour on the Congo natives, but the latest report of Mr. Lamont, Consul for England, goes far to show that that charge was ill founded, and that, as the writer of this book has insisted for many years, without forced labour the savages of Africa cannot be civilized. In his report Mr. Lamont describes the situation, and declares that what has been termed forced labour in the Congo was originated to oblige the

native man to take his share of work along with the womenfolk, as is perhaps invariably required in a new and unopened country. This is more than exoneration of King Leopold II. He made men, his savage subjects, work, and allowed them the wherewithal to support their wives and family.

Every year brings improvements in the laws which govern the Congo. For those who have not travelled in wild Africa, or who at least do not use the large maps Lord Salisbury advocated, figures relative to the Congo are frequently deceptive. It must be remembered that in that colony which contains 1,418,757 square miles, and has a native savage and largely cannibal population of 17,000,000, there are even to-day all told not more than 5,465 white men.[1] Vice-Consul Castens, who made a tour of his district in the end of 1912, reported with regard to the Baketa and Lulua regions, that the natives were well provisioned, able to pay the taxes and content with the new *régime*. In his report Mr. Castens said: "It is difficult to realize that the Kasai can possibly have been the scene of atrocities in the past. These certainly do not exist to-day, and though brutalities are brought to light from time to time, they are almost, if not entirely, confined to assaults amongst the natives themselves."

In fact, atrocities by white men on blacks in the Congo were never committed as alleged since

[1] The figures relating to the white population of the Congo are taken from the official returns. No official return is made of the number of the native population, but Belgian geographers estimate it at seventeen millions. Cf. Goffart, *le Congo*, p. 4. English writers estimate it at thirty millions.

King Leopold II became sovereign of the State and sent his soldiers to govern it. England's hostility to the Belgian Congo, most happily, need no longer be inquired into, for it has ceased. Tardily and with the least able and least courteous words which the most able and courteous member of the English Cabinet could use, the Foreign Minister announced that England at length recognized the Congo as a Belgian colony. "I think," said Sir Edward Grey in the House of Commons, "every other Power has explicitly or practically recognized the Congo as a Belgian province, and now that the state of affairs has so vastly improved, for us to continue to separate ourselves from all other Powers and withhold the recognition that others have given would give Belgium justifiable grounds of complaint, and would impair those cordial relations which it is our earnest and sincere desire to maintain with the Belgian Government."

What the Foreign Minister admitted with some discretion the leader of the Conservative party emphasized with no discretion. Mr. Bonar Law said it was politically expedient to recognize the Belgian Congo. He declared "every one who realizes what the political situation of Europe is must realize that the moment the moral necessity of refusing recognition was taken away, it was in the highest degree expedient that Belgium should no longer have any possible sense of grievance against us on the ground that we had not sanctioned that annexation."

England's hand, withdrawn without reason, and reproffered grudgingly, has been grasped eagerly

and warmly, and for Belgium the Small State, and England the Great Power all's well that end's well.[1]

[1] In his speech in reply to the address presented to him by the Chamber for the New Year of 1914, King Albert announced the intention of the Government to propose important modifications of the Colonial Charter; chiefly by the vesting of large powers of local government in the Congo in the Governor of the Colony and a Council composed of high officials, and by Belgium's acceptance of responsibility for the Congo Debt. When Belgium annexed the Congo in 1908, it was laid down that the finances of the mother country and the Colony should remain separate. The change of the Congo *régime*, followed by the fall in the price of rubber created a situation which made it impossible for development of the Colony to be continued without assistance from outside. The approximate returns for 1912 show a deficit of £253,334 for the ordinary expenses. The budget of 1913 anticipated a deficit of £420,598, and that of 1914 a deficit of £800,000; in addition to which the supplementary estimates were £808,809 in 1912, and £600,960 in 1913. On the 1st of July, 1913, there were Bonds of the Congo Treasury in circulation to the amount of £2,878,260.

CHAPTER XVI

RELIGION, POLITICS, AND EDUCATION

At the Parliamentary elections of 1912 the Liberals and the Socialists of Belgium united to pull down from power the Catholic Government, which had held office for an uninterrupted period of twenty-eight years. Their attempt was without success. They were routed with heavy losses, and the battle lost, the strangely joined allies parted, the Socialists to plan a general strike, the Liberals to fortify their treasuries and counting-houses.

The one policy on which the Liberals and Socialists were able to unite was that of overturning the Government, their only rallying cry in these elections was the old cry of Frère Orban : "Down with the Convents." Since that remains the war-cry, in order to show how Belgium stands to-day it becomes necessary to describe the situation of the Church in that country, and the cause of the attacks upon it.

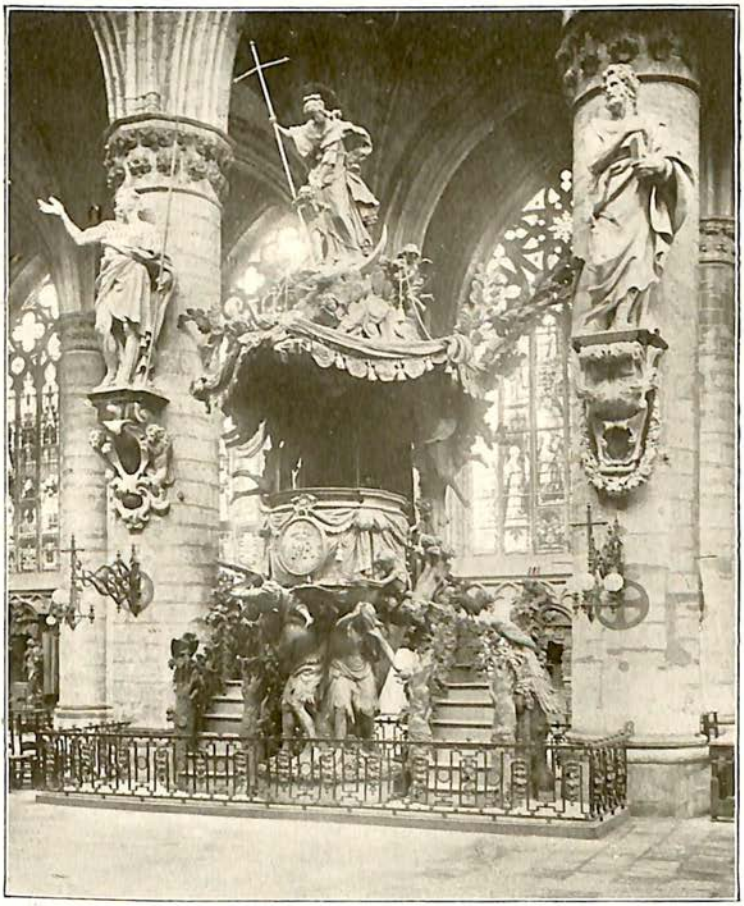
The Church as regards the State owes its position in Belgium to four articles of the Constitution made by the National Congress, and to unrepealed laws of the Napoleonic era. The first of the articles relating to worship framed by the Congress guarantees the liberty of religion, the right of its public

exercise, and of people publicly to maintain their opinions. The second prescribes that no one shall be constrained in any manner whatever to take part in the acts or ceremonies of religion, or to observe the religious holidays. The third lays down that the State has no right to intervene either in the nomination or the installation of the ministers of any religion; or to prevent them from corresponding with their superiors, and publishing their acts, due regard being had to the ordinary law regulating the press and publication; this act further prescribes that a civil marriage must always precede the religious ceremony of marriage. The fourth article provides that the salaries and pensions of ministers of all religions are at the charge of the State.

The law of the 18th Germinal of the year X, modified by a decree of the 30th of December, 1809, obliges the Provincial Councils to provide annually for upkeep of the Cathedral Churches, the Episcopal Palaces, and the Diocesan Seminaries. Parliament provides large sums for the construction and embellishment of churches; and the cost of religious services, originally regulated by decrees of the years IX and X of the French Republic, have been modified by new tariffs adopted in 1879 and 1880.

The Communal law obliges the Communes to give financial assistance for church buildings to the consistories, in cases where the means at the disposal of these bodies are not sufficient without such assistance.

Notwithstanding the fact that many of the laws



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BRUSSELS ; THE PULPIT IN THE COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF ST. GUDULE

which regulate religious as well as civil matters in Belgium are unrepealed enactments applied to that country while it was annexed to France under the first Republic and the First Empire, Catholic historians hold that the relation between the Church and State is not what it was at the Napoleonic period. "The Congress," says M. Woeste, "carried out a practical work. It did not wish to maintain the Napoleonic *régime*, which subordinated Church to State. Neither did it wish a radical separation, making the Church and State strangers to each other. It rallied to a third thesis, that of the distinction of the powers, leaving each one complete liberty, but permitting them to come to an agreement for the common good." [1]

M. Woeste, who is the recognized leader of the ultra-Catholics of Belgium, explains what his party considers the relations between Church and State. It is sufficient, he says, to place oneself on practical grounds to realize that there are between the two societies, the two authorities, inevitable points of contact, and be convinced that unless incessant conflicts be provoked, or even religious liberty sterilized, charitable concord and reciprocal conciliation is desirable. In proof of this contention the Catholic leader cites the instances of religious ceremonies to provide for which the Church must be allowed financial resources; out-of-door processions for which police regulations are desirable; State subsidized hospitals to which, under proper regulations, ministers of religion should be admitted,

[1] "Les rapports de l'Église et de l'État en Belgique," *La Revue Générale* (1908), p. 17.

and religious instruction in the schools maintained by the State, regarding which accord with the State is necessary. Again, M. Woeste contends the State should subsidize private schools. Expressing the views of the Catholic party, he declares the liberty of instruction loyally understood, forbids the civil powers to make disastrous competition with private instruction. He holds that if all the subsidies are reserved for official establishments a shocking inequality is arrived at between the schools.[1] To these theories, Liberal principles in Belgium have been opposed from the first. Above all, they are opposed to the interference of the Church in education. The Liberals always knew that where the Church was the chief instructor a Liberal State, such as they conceived it, could not exist. Party feeling had, however, been put aside at the Belgian revolution and, for years, moderation was shown on all sides.

Immediately after the proclamation of the national independence, the Catholics applied themselves to the task of reorganizing and developing the work of education which had been ruined or brought to disgrace by the Dutch Government. In the space of ten years they obtained such a remarkable result in the department of elementary teaching that the capture by them of the entire field of primary instruction might have been confidently anticipated. They, alone, had availed themselves of the freedom accorded to education by the Constitution.

By the end of 1840, out of 5,589 primary schools

[1] Woeste, *op. cit.*, pp. 10, 11.

in Belgium, 2,284 were entirely maintained and managed by Catholics, without taking into account the State-aided schools which were placed under their care. Education was rapidly extended and improved without an appreciable co-operation on the part of the State. The interference of the State was mostly a matter of form, as statesmen of that period agreed in restricting interference to a minimum. They regarded it as an occasional necessity. When almost the whole of the education of the country was in the hands of the Catholics, the Liberals began to bestir themselves. Acting moderately, they prevailed on a large number of the Catholics to abandon their first position, as to the incompetence of the State, and to consent to the intervention of the Government for the union of the schools in one common system. In return for this concession the Catholics stipulated that education and instruction in the schools should be based on religious principles. The agreement between the two parties, arrived at by concession on either side, was embodied in the Education Act of 1842.

By virtue of that act the teaching of religion and morality was obligatory in all communal primary schools. Instruction was given by the master himself in every school in accordance with the religion professed by the majority of the pupils. Children not belonging to the same religious communion as the majority of pupils were dispensed from attending the definite religious instruction given, but such dispensation had by no means the effect of eliminating the religious tone given in the general course of teaching. This was obligatory.

Ministers of religion were authorized to inspect the schools at all times; the law entrusted them with the control of the books used in the teaching of religion and morals, and also of the books assigned for "reading lessons." [1]

"Each commune was obliged to have at least one school within its boundaries, but the necessity of building or maintaining schools could be obviated either by making an agreement with a private school and adopting and subsidizing it, or by proving that the free education actually provided sufficed for the needs of the population. In order to pay for the education of the poor children, the charge of which devolved on them, the Communes might subsidize the private schools attended by those children." [2]

The law was equitably administered by all the Ministers of the Interior, Liberals as well as Catholics, for a quarter of a century. Loyally carried out, it adapted itself to the country and the wishes of the great majority of the people. The progress of education under it was evident in all parts. In 1845 the number of children attending the primary schools, communal, free, and adopted was, 126,385; in 1875 the official number was 652,657, an increase of 31 per cent. in thirty-one years, allowing for the increase in the population. This progress

[1] Advantage was taken of this law in several towns by Protestants and Jews, who opened schools paid by the Communes and the State, in which their religion was taught; but as the great majority of the children of the country were Catholics, the doctrine of the Catholic Church was generally taught.

[2] Pierre Verhaegen, *La Lutte scolaire en Belgique*, pp. 5 *et seq.*

continued; in 1843 the number of young people who could read and write was 49·15 per cent., or less than half of the population; in 1880 it was 77·16 per cent., or more than three-quarters of the population.

Content with the law as it was administered, the Catholics allowed the organization of their private schools to fall into decay. From a total of 2,284 private schools in 1840 the number had fallen to 1,430 in 1875, and of these only 958 were free of public control, while during the same period the number of communal schools had risen from 2109 to 4,157. The Catholics continually voted larger and larger sums for the maintenance of the official schools. In 1843 the expenditure on the primary schools was about £100,000; in 1875 it was more than £960,000; in 1878, the year the Catholic Ministry fell, it had risen to more than £1,120,000.

During this period of tranquillity the Liberal party was forming itself: Radicals, themselves dominated by Free Masons of the continental type, ruled its councils. At the Liberal Congress of 1846 it was agreed that there was a necessity of revising the law and of organizing public education under the exclusive direction of civil power, by giving to the latter constitutional means of competing with private schools, and of doing away with the authorized intervention of ministers of religion in the education organized by the State; but there was no speedy attempt to make this doctrine law.

There were thirteen years more of tranquillity; it was in 1859 that the first trace of official and united

action on the part of Free Masonry in the matter of education was perceived.

In that year the Grand-Orient of Belgium placed the question of compulsory education on the programme of all the lodges subject to it. The majority of these lodges in compliance with its directions sent up memorials which were published in Brussels in 1863. That sent by the Lodge of Antwerp is typical. It declared, "The authorized intervention of priests in education forcibly annihilates the instructor, paralyses him and deprives the children of all instruction, moral, logic and national. The teaching of the catechism is the greatest obstacle to the development of the faculties of the child. The human spirit, if it were freed from that mass of things which falsifies it, would become more just, more upright, more modest." The Lodge of Namur went further and declared, "The essential feature of compulsory education is that it should take no notice of religion, or, perhaps, even of morals."

The propaganda of the lodges was successful in the great towns; in Brussels and its faubourgs, in Ghent, Antwerp, and Liége, and in many of the second-rate towns in which communal administration had passed from the hands of Catholics and moderate Liberals to that of the most extreme Radicals. In these places since 1865 the law of 1842 became a dead letter. The choice of teachers lay in the hands of the communes: in every possible case teachers inimical to the Church and its instruction were appointed.

The revision of the Law of 1842 was soon on the programme of all the Liberal leaders, including

Frère Orban. The attacks on those who favoured religious instruction became more and more vigorous. "One speaks of the right of a father over his child," declared M. Laurent, "it is the language of barbarous society;" and La Flandre wrote, "Whatever one may say or write, all the Liberals will never cease to combat with every means and by every method the Catholic faith; our only enemy, we do wrong to forget it sometimes, is the Church."

These declarations were over-violent, the Liberals were defeated at the elections of 1870, and the Catholics held power for the eight years which followed, under the moderate administration of M. Malau. In 1878 the Liberals, making a lesser outcry than before, but still talking much of Clerical danger, were returned with a majority. Five days after the elections, on the 5th of June, 1878, the Liberal Cabinet was formed, under the Premiership of Frère Orban. All its members were Free Masons.[1] Its first action was to form a new department, that of Public Instruction, of which M. van Humbeeck was appointed Minister. "He will be the Minister of the Liberal Religion," said the official *Echo de Parlement.*

At the opening of Parliament which followed, it was declared in the speech from the throne: "Public education must depend exclusively on the civil authorities." This was a declaration of war against religious education. On the 21st

[1] Verhaegen, *op. cit.* But Bernard de Francqueville says: "Les membres appartenaient à peu près tous à la franc-maçonnerie."—*Léon XIII, la Belgique et la lutte scolaire.*

of January, 1879, the expected Education Bill of the Government was introduced. Its aim was to abolish religious instruction, and for the moral teaching based on the doctrines of Christianity given up to then to substitute what was called instruction in Universal Morality. The Law laid it down as a principle that official instruction should be of a neutral character. The State, by reason of its incompetence, should exclude religious instruction from the programme of the public schools. Religion must be left to be taught by families and the ministers of the various communions. It was provided that in the teaching of Universal Morality all dogmatic elements derived from Catholicism or any other form of religion should be rigorously excluded. Every commune should have a school managed on these principles. One concession was made to the ministers of religion. They were permitted to come before and after school hours, and, in a place set apart, give religious instruction to such pupils as were not exempted from it. The authorization of free training schools for teachers was abolished; in future only the State schools would be entitled to present candidates for diplomas, and the Communal Councils could only make choice of masters from amongst those furnished with diplomas. Ecclesiastical Inspectors were done away with, and the clergy lost all control over the teaching, the training-school examinations, and the class books. Free schools were deprived of their rights to grants, and the communes could no longer adopt them. The authority of the communes in matters of religious instruction was practically

abolished. A system of minute State surveillance was organized. The communes were compelled to send poor children entitled to gratuitous teaching to the official schools. They were deprived of the greater part of their authority over the teachers and over the internal economy of their schools. Educational Committees were formed, charged with the duties of superintending the official primary schools, conjointly with the communal authorities. The boundaries of the districts over which these committees had power were fixed by the Minister of Public Instruction. They consisted of either one or several communes. If the boundaries enclosed only one commune, the commune appointed the committees; if they consisted of more than one, the Minister appointed them. By this means the power of appointing the committees was placed everywhere in the hands of the Liberals. Where the Communal Councils were Liberals, they were left the right of appointing them; where they were Catholic, the Liberal Government by grouping several communes together gave itself the right of appointing them.

Three hundred and seventeen thousand fathers of families petitioned against this measure. The Belgian bishops fulminated against it. Intervention by the Pope was called for by both parties to the struggle. The bishops submitted to him their pastorals, and their letters of instruction to the clergy; and Frère Orban called on him, under threats of ceasing diplomatic relations with the Holy See, to order the bishops and the clergy to desist from opposition to the passing of the act.

Throughout the struggle Leo XIII counselled moderation to the bishops. While condemning the proposed measure as it stood he suggested, time and time again, that means might be found of reconciling it with the conscience of the Catholics. Frère Orban would make no concession, the bishops said that, conscientiously, they could make none, and in the end Frère Orban, as he had intimated he would at the moment of assuming office, broke off diplomatic relations with the Holy See.[1]

The Education Law was passed on the 1st of July, 1879. The day it passed the Senate, the bishops issued a pastoral letter forbidding Catholic parents to send their children to the schools maintained under the new law, and forbidding Catholic teachers to give instruction in them. Immediately wonderful sights were seen, 2,253 teachers abandoned the schools. On every side the children trooped out, never to return. On every side new Catholic free schools were established. The first necessity was to find school-houses. In a great number of communes no fitting buildings were to be found; in all these communes free schools were speedily built. The rich and the poor contributed of their private means or their savings to their erection. The family of Arenburg built one hundred schools, the Mérodes, Robianos, Caraman-Chimays followed their example, peasants gave plots of land, servants gave half their wages, school-children gave up their prizes, curés and vicaires sold their libraries, sometimes even their

[1] On this most instructive episode see the official Belgian publication: *La Belgique et la Vatican* (*passim*).

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CHARLES WOESTE, CATHOLIC LEADER, MINISTER OF STATE

sacred vessels, to contribute funds for the building of school-houses. While the schools were being built chateaux, farm-houses, wine shops, and barns were lent to be used as schoolrooms. The new schools themselves were built with great rapidity, and well-built, masons, carpenters, tilers giving their services without pay. In one place the school was built in sixteen days; in another in three weeks; in many the school-houses were built in one month. Before the vacation had ended, room was found for nearly all who had left the communal schools. A year after the passing of the law of 1879 the Catholics had founded 2,064 free schools. In 1884 they had 3,885 with 8,713 teachers.

At the last moment that the law of 1842 was in force 86·9 per cent. of the children attending schools attended Government schools, and 13·1 per cent. attended free schools of the Catholics. The next year the Government had lost 59·7 of their pupils and the free schools of the Catholics had gained them. It was calculated that forty million francs (£1,600,000) were subscribed by private donations for the equipment of these schools, and nine or ten million (£360,000 or £400,000) a year subscribed for their upkeep.

On its side the Liberal Government did all in its power to force the children into communal schools. It obliged the communes to erect and keep up schools. It made liberal grants, at the expense of the communes, to schoolmasters and schoolmistresses. Schoolmasters who had only two or three children attending their school were

largely paid, and their wives who had none at all were also largely paid as schoolmistresses for duties they had no means of performing.

All the influence the Government possessed was used on those in its employ, down to rural policemen and railway porters, to force children into the communal schools. People were refused employment in the Government service, old men deprived of pensions given to them by the official bureaux de bienfaisance, old women were refused medicine and allowed to die, parents were refused coffins for their dead children, because their children or grandchildren attended the free schools.

In this great contest the Liberal Government was miserably defeated. In November 1879, Frère Orban declared in the Chamber that "only a hundred and sixty-eight schools were absolutely deserted." The number, it is said, was greater, but the number of schools which had no pupils save the children of the schoolmaster, or only two pupils was very great, while the number of schools who had no pupils in them but babies of a few years old, only fit for créches, was not inconsiderable.[1]

In 1880 there were 333,501 children in the schools of the Government, and 580,380 in the free schools of the Catholics, being 63·5 per cent. of the total in the Catholic schools. In its determination to make the Education Law a success the Govern-

[1] The descriptions given of the scenes in the "schools" which had babies for pupils, cannot be repeated here. Those who have seen Joerdaens' paintings can imagine something of what they were like. The schools were not Kindergartens.

ment changed its tactics. It offered books and all other necessary furniture, and clothes to the children, and did all that was possible to give a religious appearance to the schools. At one moment the minister of Public Instruction bought £12,000 worth of catechisms for use in the schools, and the schoolmasters were instructed to take the children to mass and show themselves fervent in religious exercises. These tactics came too late. No one believed in them; they disgusted both Catholics and Liberals alike. As a last resource the Government appointed, in 1880, a commission to inquire, nominally, into the complaints made by the bishops against the communal schools but in reality to collect as much evidence as possible against Catholics. The manner in which evidence was collected from village rowdies and free-thinkers who had spites against the Church; and the manner in which the curés, when they were allowed to appear, were browbeaten by the commissioners appointed by the Government, was the final act of the Liberals in making themselves discredited. At the Parliamentary elections which took place on the 10th of June, 1884, the Government was defeated, and the Catholics returned to power. Of all the members of the out-going Liberal Cabinet, two only were re-elected.

The Catholics returned with a majority of thirty-four votes. Their first action was the repeal of the Education Law voted by the Liberals eight years before, and the restoration of the ancient system which decentralized education, gave larger powers to the local authorities, and safeguarded the right

of parents to the choice of schools and institutions they preferred for their children.[1]

As was to be expected, a great outcry arose in the Liberal centres at the passing of this law, which undid the Liberal work of eight years. To the inflamed speeches of the defeated Liberals members of the new Catholic Cabinet retorted in speeches no less fiery. The result of the Communal elections which followed the Parliamentary elections served to aggravate matters. The Liberals, always in a majority in the councils of the great towns, gained increased majorities at the new Communal elections, and cried out that their municipal victories indicated a reaction against the Catholics. At this juncture King Leopold II intervened. Recalling the precedent of 1857, when a Catholic Ministry resigned because the Communal elections were adverse to their supporters, the King declared the result of the Communal elections in the cities should be considered the expression of the people's will, and compelled the Ministers chiefly attacked to withdraw from the Cabinet.

By his action King Leopold II showed himself as autocratic as his father had shown himself to be on more than one grave occasion; but his action was contrary to that of his father in 1857. In the crisis of that year, it will be remembered, King Leopold I had adjured the Ministry to remain in office, protesting that the elections of town councillors had nothing to do with the great affairs of the nation.

[1] For details of this law, and the manner in which it has been administered, see the Appendix.

The dismissal of the Ultramontane Ministers tranquillized the citizens, and the outcry against the Education Law ceased. The peace that followed was soon, and rudely disturbed. On the 26th of March, 1886, there was a riot, quickly suppressed, in Liége. Eight days afterwards the miners of Charleroi rose, and led a formidable strike. The pay of the miners was not large, they had grievances to complain of, impositions in the nature of the truck system, and such like, but in their strike they did not seek to have any special grievance remedied, or work for any political end. "Those who took part in it," say MM. Vandervelde and Destrée, the historians of the Socialist party in Belgium, "cared little for Clerical or Liberal, for Progressionist or Doctrinaire. Here and there some stray readers of the 'Catéchisme du Peuple' were encountered, but even these had no wish for Universal Suffrage. . . . There was nothing but a brutal, ferocious, unconscionable desire of enjoyment and riches. The strike was the outcome of the events at Liége; it had no definite aim. The miners made motiveless and vague demands for an augmentation of their salaries, an amelioration of their lot. Many even demanded nothing. The strike did not appear to have any particular cause; it was directed against the managers, the Government, against Society, against one knew not what. It was before all a great manifestation of fatigued unfortunates, weary of dying slowly by degrees, who crossed their arms simply awaiting an unknown to-morrow which could not be worse than the day before. From where the amelioration would come

no one amongst them could say, but the desire of all was to see a colossal strike of all the provinces, and in all the industries, as if the total arrest of national work could force the nation to succour the unfortunates." [1]

By evening the strike became formidable ; bands of strikers went from mine to mine, forcing the miners to join them, threatening, if they did not come immediately from the mines, to close the ventilation shafts. Soon the mass of strikers became enormous. Charleroi, and the districts around it, Loelinsart, Gilly, Montigny, Chatelineau, Bampreny, Marthionnes, form a compact agglomeration, like an immense industrial town, of which the different quarters are only indicated by the spires of their churches. The three great industries of the country—mining, glass-blowing, and iron-founding—are not localized in certain villages clearly separated, but, on the contrary, the workshops are crowded closely one against the other. The iron works groan beside the dark mines and the glowing glass works. All these establishments enclose dwelling-houses amidst their formidable labour of fire and iron. The disposition of the district obliged the miners going from mine to mine to pass before the glass works. The strikers obliged the glass workers to join with them. If the miners vaguely felt they had a grievance, the glass workers knew they had none. Their pay was high, they owned their houses, had savings, enjoyed comforts, and regarded themselves as an aristocracy in the

[1] Destrée and Vandervelde, *Le Socialism en Belgique*, pp. 84 *et seq.*

working class, which, under ordinary circumstances, would have little to say to miners. Under compulsion they joined the band of the strikers. The next day the iron workers were also forced to join the band, which now pillaged the country, burned down a great factory and the house of its proprietor, and during three days spread terror abroad.

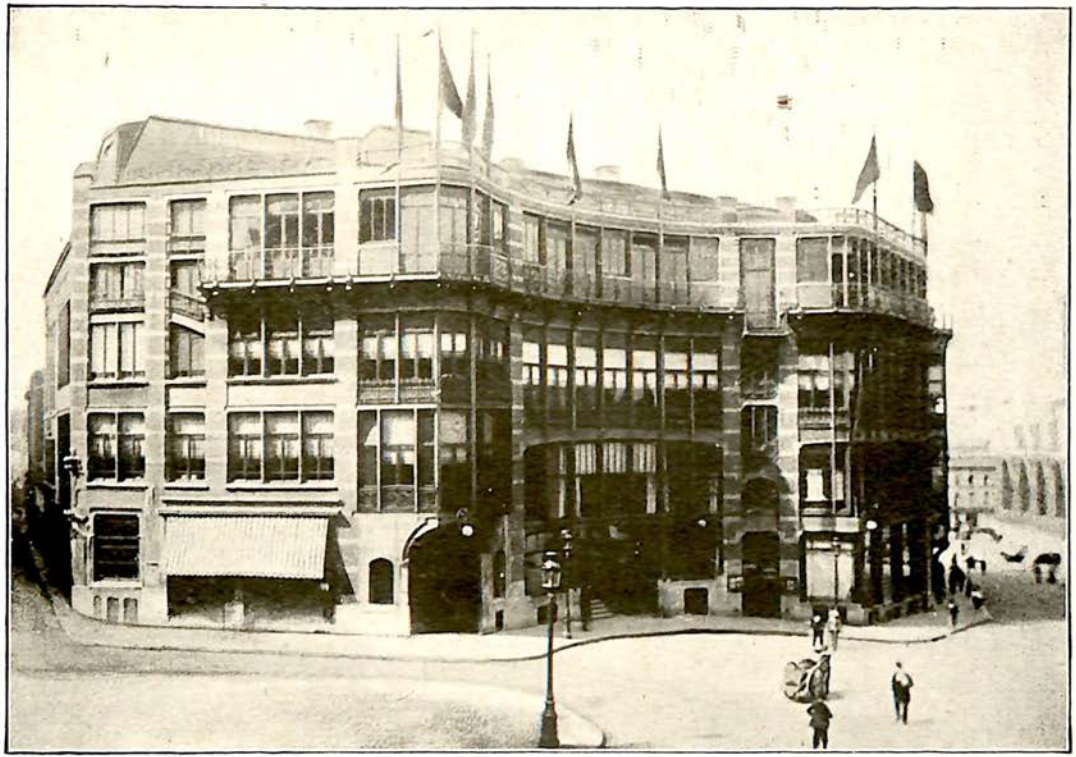
At last the troops arrived: the strikers were dispersed, their ringleaders arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced to long periods of imprisonment.

This strike is memorable not only because it was the first attempt at a general strike, but also because from it the Socialist party developed itself and learned its most dangerous tactics. Up to the time of the strike that party, created in Belgium in 1883, was little known outside a small group of enthusiasts.

Neither from the strike, nor from the development of the Socialist party which followed it, came the era of social reform in Belgium. Spontaneously, the Catholics held a Congress for Social Works at Liége, and commenced the work of social reform which has enabled their party to advance the condition of the people to a comparatively high degree of prosperity, and, by earning their country's gratitude, to retain the government in their own hands up to the present time.

The strike caused the Government to nominate a commission to inquire into the state of the working classes. The findings of that commission have already been recounted in this work.

The Socialist syndicates grew largely during a period of strikes which extended from 1886 to 1894. When there were no strikes the Socialists became disorganized, and their organization might have ceased to exist, had not their leaders found a sure means of binding the members of the party together, and spreading their propaganda amongst the lower classes of the people. There were then no large bakeries in Belgium. In farms the bread was home-made, and in villages, even those on the outskirts of cities such as Brussels, it was also home-made; the villagers baking their bread in bake-houses which stood for common use in each village. In the towns the bakeries seldom had more than eight or ten families as customers. Bread was dear in consequence, and, possibly, not very good. In 1886, when Socialism was at its lowest ebb in Belgium, its most important members decided on starting a co-operative bakery. In his *Histoire de la Co-opération en Belgique*, Louis Bertrand tells how there was started the bakery of the Maison du Peuple, in Brussels, which is now the largest bakery in Belgium. "A group of workmen of every trade decided to create a co-operative society for the exploitation of a bakery. Each member engaged to pay ten francs, in weekly sums of twenty-five to fifty centimes. At the end of some months there were about eighty adherents, and the sum in hand amounted to about 700 francs. These eighty members needed about 120 loaves of bread, weighing one kilogramme a loaf, every day for their families. Some one lent us a cellar containing a baker's oven, for thirty-five francs a month, a cart



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BRUSSELS ; THE MAISON DU PEUPLE

(*The Headquarters of the International Socialist Bureau*)

drawn by a dog, utensils, and wood for firing. A flour merchant sold us fifteen sacks of flour for which we paid cash, after which he consented to give us credit, and he was paid every fortnight. A working baker was engaged; in the morning he baked the bread, and in the afternoon he carried it to all the members—no easy thing, for there were members in every quarter of the town and faubourgs. The society was managed gratuitously by a committee of nine members, of whom one was secretary, and another treasurer. The gain on each loaf was very great in the beginning, above all, for the bakers charged on an average from eight to twelve centimes a loaf. It was a fine economy for a working family. The women spoke of it to their neighbours, and thus, little by little, the number of members mounted from eighty to two hundred. To-day this co-operative counts more than 1,800 members, which, at the rate of about five members in each family, makes about 90,000 consumers."

The bakery, which owns the Maison du Peuple, the Socialists' headquarters in Brussels, has many more customers than the number of its members, for its bread is sold to all who will purchase it, and its carts pass through every street in Brussels. The profits that it gains are enormous; only a portion of them goes in cash to its members, the rest is put into the war chest of the Socialists. According to the rules cited by MM. Destrée and Vandervelde the profits of this, and the other Socialist co-operatives, are divided into three parts; one for a sinking fund and reserve; another for

the Socialist propaganda; and a third for the dividend of the members; but the participation of the members in the profits is variable according to the region. In Brussels and in the Walloon country the temptation to customers is the reduction in the price of bread; in Flanders, on the contrary, it is sought to provide large dividends by keeping the price of bread at a remunerative sum.

Besides selling bread the Socialist co-operatives, now spread all over the country, sell almost everything else working men can desire, luxuries as well as necessities. At the Maisons du Peuple there are large cafés, with theatres attached, at which also great profits are made. Those who are members of the co-operatives must also be members of the Socialist organization. So active is the political propaganda of the Socialist party alimented by the money of the co-operatives, at election times, every working man and tradesman, Socialist or not, has placed in his hands a pamphlet setting forth reasons, relating to his own trade and condition, why he should vote for the Socialists. The attractions of the Socialist organization are so great, few of the working classes could resist them, were it not that the attractions of the Catholic Societies are equally great; and the Catholic Societies were founded before the Socialist ones. The Catholics have not founded co-operative societies in the towns, because they have no desire to form opposition to small or large shopkeepers, but they have many societies, such as the "Fédération Ouvrière Catholique de Liége," which dates from 1867, for

those engaged in trade or industry; and in the country they have the great co-operative Society of the Farmers, the Borenbond, whose immense success has at once enriched the land, and prevented the Socialists from gaining a footing in the country parts.

Strong as the Socialists became by means of their co-operative establishments, they had no hope of entering Parliament until the party of their greatest enemies, the Catholics, carried a measure of electoral reform. The Belgian Constitution fixed the qualification for electors for the Chamber on a monetary basis. None could vote but ratepayers, and the qualification should not be reduced lower than the payment of forty-two francs and thirty-two centimes in rates. Long years before the rise of the Socialists, the Liberals, in a moment of panic, when Europe was swept by revolution, had reduced the qualification to this sum. Their panic passed, the Liberals refused further change. The Catholics, on the contrary, desired reform. Parliamentary reform was placed on the programme of their party in the year 1884. To carry it an article of the Constitution should be altered, and for this it was necessary to have a majority of two-thirds in the Chamber. The Catholics had not so great a majority, but they felt sufficiently strong to dissolve Parliament and appeal to the country on the question in May 1892. They returned with a large, but not yet sufficient majority, having ninety-two votes to sixty Liberals. For years the most advanced section of the Catholic party, one of the chiefs of which was M. Henry Carton de

Wiart, now Minister of Justice, had advocated manhood, or, as the Belgians call it, Universal Suffrage. This section found it necessary to join itself with that led by others more cautious than it, such as M. Northomb, a former Minister of Justice, the Baron d'Haulleville, Messieurs Theodor and Alexandre Braun, who advocated votes for every citizen aged thirty-five, who had spent three years' residence in one voting district. The more Conservative section of the party, led by MM. Woest and de Smet de Nayer, proposed household suffrage. Finally a compromise was suggested by a Catholic deputy, M. Nyssens, afterwards first Minister of Industry, and carried by means of a coalition with advanced Liberals, and in the face of violent abuse by the Socialists, who agitated for manhood suffrage. This system, which is still in force, gives every male citizen who has attained the age of twenty-five years one vote, it gives two votes to every married man, father of a family, who pays at least five francs a year in taxes, or has higher monetary qualifications; and two additional votes to every one who possesses a diploma or fills high office; but allows no one to have more than three votes. The first elections under this system were held on the 14th of October, 1894. Instead of 137,772, which had been the number of voters at the previous elections, there were at these elections 1,350,891 voters, with 2,085,605 votes. The new electorate confirmed the power of the Catholics. Of 152 seats, the Catholic party gained 105. These elections gave the Socialists their first entry into the Chamber, with twenty-nine seats. The Socialist

gain was made up of Liberal losses, the Liberals having no more than eighteen seats. It seemed as if the Liberal power was gone for ever in Belgium.

General elections are rare in Belgium. As a rule each member is elected for four years, and one-half the Chamber retires every two years. The elections of 1894 having been exceptional, partial elections took place in 1896. These confirmed the verdict of the previous election, the situation of the parties being, after them, Catholic 111, Socialists 29, and Liberals 12. There was still agitation for reform; it was held that every party should have fair representation in the Chamber, and the Catholics, sharing this opinion, proposed and carried, as a new Reform Act, a measure of proportional representation. By this system the number of electors in each electoral division is divided by the number of seats in the division; the result arrived at is called the "Quota." None are elected but those the votes cast for whose lists equal the quota. The elections take place on party lists, but any man may form a party for himself, and present a one-man list if he choose. If the elector places a mark on the head of a list, that indicates he votes for the candidates on the list in the order in which they are placed. If he wishes to vote for one candidate in preference to the others who are placed above that candidate on the list, he can do so by placing a mark against the candidate's name, but while his vote remains good for that candidate, it does not count in the calculation of the quota. This system has produced excellent results in giving

to the various parties a really proportional representation. There is no allowance made for indifference to politics in Belgium. Every citizen who is entitled to vote is obliged to vote, and so strictly is the law on compulsory voting enforced that electors who are away from the districts in which they should vote, have their travelling expenses to the place of voting paid by the Government, and heavy fines are threatened for those who do not vote, but there are no fines, for all vote who can.

The first elections held under the system of proportional representation, showed the Catholics still in a majority, and they remained in a majority in every succeeding election, until it became clear that nothing could overturn them but a coalition between Liberals and Socialists. The Liberals are a party of employers; the Socialists preach class war, declare for a Republic, for the abolition of wages, and the merging of property in the State. An alliance between the Liberal and Socialist parties, even a temporary one to gain power, was possible only on the ground of the hate they held in common. While the power of the Socialists grew, that of the Liberals diminished, and M. Anseele cried out one day in the Chamber to the Liberals: "Either you will follow the Red Flag, or you will be nothing." The Liberals tried to ignore the threat, and the invitation it contained; but they commenced by their actions to approach the Socialists.

When the elections of 1912 approached their surrender was complete. To these elections par-

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ÉMILE VANDERVELDE, LEADER OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY

ticular importance was given by the fact that there were twenty-seven new seats to be voted for; the increase in the population in the previous decade necessitating a proportional increase in the Parliamentary representation. Liberals and Socialists agreed their battle cry should be "Down with the Convents!" and their programme the abolition of religious instruction. There were also cries raised by the Socialists for Universal Suffrage, but it was on the question of education, religious or anti-religious, that the electoral battle was fought.

In view of the elections an alliance, or what was called a cartel, was formed between Liberals and Socialists, and the completeness of the surrender of the Liberals was shown on the 15th of August, 1911, when the Liberal leaders were seen marching through the streets of Brussels, side by side with the Socialists, behind the Red Flag, led by Socialist bands, playing the Internationale. Moderate Liberals, who saw these things, and who had seen their leaders bend, more and more, beneath the Socialist yoke, during the past years, feared to see them bend lower still than their words betrayed, following without moderation on the path of the Socialists. They remembered the words of M. Vandervelde, the leader of the Socialists, "Neither on the question of the Republic, nor on any of the fundamental points of International Socialism, will there be compromise or bending on the part of the Belgian Labour party. We rest unanimous in this double cry, which is but one in our hearts, 'Vive le Socialism! Vive la Republique!' . . .

Royalty is only the weathercock which surmounts the capitalist citadel, the day that falls the weathercock will fall with it."

It was the moderate Liberals, joining the steadfast Catholics, who gave the Catholic party their decisive victory at the polls on the 2nd of June, 1912. Under the system of proportional representation a very large majority is not possible. In the last Chamber the majority of the Catholics over the combined forces of the opposition was eight; after the elections of 1912 their majority in the Chamber was sixteen. Of the old seats they gained in the elections of 1912, three, and lost one; and of the new seats they gained eleven. In the whole of the country their majority over all their opponents was 77,981.

This result was greater than the Catholics had hoped for. They had hoped for an increased majority, but not for one so greatly increased. The results astounded the parties of the opposition. On the morning of the election *Le Peuple*, the organ of the Socialists, predicted a majority of Liberals and Socialists over Catholics, of eight. "We do not hesitate to predict," it said, "that the 2nd of June, marking at the same time the fall of the clerical dominion, will mark the most comforting advance of the Partie Ouvrière. We breathe the air of victory, and in victory we have nobly and bravely gained, not only by the energy, the vigour, the homogeneity, the enthusiasm, of the electoral crusade; but, also, and above all, by ten years of patient and laborious effort, ten years of heavy toil on the ground of syndical labour, as well as that of

the moral and intellectual awakening. Our squadrons were never more filled, our spontaneous discipline was never more powerful, and more fraternal. One for all, and all for one, we march to the battle, with that invincible spirit of class which is our force and our 'labarum.' While as to the Bourgeois, we do them the honour of believing that they will show themselves not less wise, not less full of sang-froid, and sagacity, than the people of the workshop and the manufactories. M. Paul Hymans has proclaimed at the magnificent meeting at the Cinque Royale 'the Belgian Proletariat merits the salute of all men of good will, it has the right to universal respect and universal credit.' "

So sure were the Liberals, on their part, of victory for themselves and their allies that they gave themselves up to the pleasure of Cabinet making. *L'avenir du Tournaisis* said, "It is reported the Socialists will adhere to the decision of the last Congress, and not consent to participate in power. If, nevertheless, they change their mind, Messieurs Vandervelde, Destrée, Bertrand, Anseele, will make without any doubt a part of the Cabinet. If not there will be no difficulty in forming a good Liberal Cabinet, with members of the two inclinations, Walloon and Flemish, members of the Senate and the Chamber," and a long list of probable Ministers was given. Other Liberal papers spoke of a Cabinet of men of business. Even *La Revue de Belgique*, a Liberal Review of the most serious and learned description, in its monthly issue, which appeared on the day of the elections, gave, proudly,

a list of its eminent collaborators, who, having been good representatives in Parliament, would, it asserted, prove excellent Cabinet Ministers.

In addition to the legitimate means of party warfare, violence and intimidation were used by the opponents of the Catholic party at these elections. Firearms are largely manufactured in Belgium, and all who choose to do so can arm themselves with revolvers of a cheap, but deadly type. Without disguise, large numbers of these arms were purchased before the elections by militant Socialists. Not only was the Government aware of this, the civic authorities were also aware of it. In a speech made a few days before the elections M. Max, the Liberal Bourgmestre of Brussels, announcing he would do his duty whatever happened, declared he greatly feared there would be an upheaving in the country if the Catholics won. On the eve of the elections a private meeting of the Catholics was held in one of their halls in the centre of the city. On leaving it the assistants found a sinister-looking and silent crowd barring the streets against them, except one that led towards the Botanical Gardens. In that street there stands a college where building operations were being carried on and loose stones to be found. Close to that college M. Colfs, a Catholic Labour Deputy for Brussels, was assaulted by men armed with knuckle-dusters, felled to the ground by blows on his head and face, and brutally kicked. Those who were with him assert that one of the armed protectors of the peace of the city of Brussels stood within a few paces of where the outrage took place, unmoved,

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PAUL HYMANS, LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY

without attempting to save the assaulted deputy. M. Colfs was rescued by members of the Red Cross Society. He escaped with serious, but not fatal, injuries. On the day of the elections his fellow-citizens showed their appreciation of his services, and their indignation at the manner in which he was assaulted, by placing him at the head of the poll. That day the Catholic newspapers found it necessary to print notices to the voters that they might leave their houses to vote in tranquillity, that measures had been taken to preserve the peace.

The measures taken were sufficient to preserve the peace at the moment of voting, but they were not sufficient to prevent serious rioting when the results of the polls were announced. In Brussels the rioters contented themselves with tearing the clothes off the backs of priests, and breaking the windows of churches and Catholic newspaper offices.

On the evening of the 3rd of June, when the results of the elections were known, there was a rising at Liége, which its ringleaders seemed to hope would be the commencement of a revolution. Hundreds of Socialists from the surrounding districts gathered in the town, and, reinforced by some thousands, attacked the offices of a newspaper and a Catholic Club, over each of which the National Flag floated, tore down the flags and burned them. When gendarmes approached to disperse the crowd, trams were torn from their rails, and the streets barricaded with them. Behind the barricades the rioters rushed to the cafés, smashed up the tables

that stood before them, tore asunder their iron legs, and flung them at the mounted gendarmes, several of whom were unhorsed, and wounded. The gendarmes sought to disperse the crowd, driving them back with the flat of their swords. The Socialists took refuge in their café, Le Populaire, and from some place in the vicinity shots were fired on the gendarmes. The police replied, directing their fire on the closed doors of the café, with fatal results. Three people were killed within the café, whereupon the people on the streets, stricken with fear, ceased their rioting, but not before much damage was done in the city. Liége was immediately placed under martial law, and tranquillity was restored as speedily as it was disturbed. At Seraing twenty thousand Socialists gathered, and marched through the streets singing the Internationale, and repeating the cry which the rioters had raised at Liége, "Vive la République!" The leaders of the Socialist party, MM. Vandervelde and De Brouckere, hastened to the centre of disturbance in an automobile, and called a general meeting, at which they implored the rioters to return to work and to abandon the idea of a strike, since no preparation had been made, and the moment was not ripe for one; they promised their hearers an extraordinary Congress of the Socialist party would be held on the 30th of June to decide on the supreme fight for Universal Suffrage. It was with difficulty they prevailed on the rioters to accept their advice. Before tranquillity was restored two thousand Belgian Socialists crossed the Belgian frontier from Quievrain into France, and approached the French miners at

Blanc-Misseron, inviting them to join with them in a general strike. The French miners promised to do so, but the strike was postponed in accordance with the wishes of the leaders of the party in Belgium.

Elsewhere in Belgium there were riots of the same description. At Antwerp a band of Catholics were set upon by the Socialists and beaten so severely that all were dangerously wounded, and one died beneath the hail of blows.

The leaders of the Socialists did all in their power to dissipate the fears of their recent allies, the Liberals, but the alarm of chiefs of industry, who had well-filled money-bags in their safes, was great; that of the traders of lower rank was greater; greatest of all was that of the poorest class of shopkeepers, hucksters and the like. All believed the strike inevitable, few dreamt it would end peacefully. Rich Liberals pictured to themselves their counting-houses pillaged, and their country mansions in flames. The keepers of shops for the poor and working classes saw themselves, in reality, ruined, at least for the moment, for all of the working classes, whether they were Socialists or not, in favour of the strike or against it, commenced to save in order to be prepared for the evil weeks of compulsory idleness in which no pay days would be known.

The Socialist conference, which the leaders promised to summon in order to decide the question of a General Strike for Universal Suffrage, was duly held on the 30th of June, in the Maison du Peuple of Brussels. The great assembly hall of that

building was packed full of delegates. Every precaution that could be taken was taken to admit none but properly elected representatives of Socialist groups, but amongst the mass there were many to whom the name of Socialist was but a cloak for disciples of a policy which no Socialist would publicly subscribe to. All the firebrands in Belgium join the Socialist party, and no means have yet been found to exclude them from it; or, it may be, it has not been considered necessary to search for any. These clamorously supported the militants amongst the Socialists' chiefs, who, led by M. Anseele, Deputy for Ghent, opposed the counsels of moderation given by the Chairman of the Party, Emile Vandervelde, and the Secretary of the International Socialist Bureau, Camille Huysmans, both of whom sought to prevent the Congress from voting in favour of the strike. The militants won the day: a general strike was decreed, to commence on the 14th of the following April, a few days before the State opening of the Ghent Exhibition of 1913, and the assembly adjourned to the large café which occupies the whole of the ground floor of the Maison du Peuple, there to sing anticipative songs of victory.

All who were Socialists prepared loyally for the strike. Notwithstanding their recent defeat at the polls, the mass of the party believed victory was certain to them. The party organization was perfect; its war chest was well filled by subscriptions swept in from at home and abroad, from Socialist comrades, from political adventurers, and from friendly or timid Liberals. On the eve of the strike

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ÉMILE CHAPELIER, LEADER OF THE BELGIAN ANARCHISTS

one of its organizers stated, not boastingly, but as a fact, that whilst five weeks' strike would crush the capitalists and bring them, represented by the Catholic Government, to their knees, the Socialist party had sufficient funds in their hands—more than a million and a quarter francs—to maintain a strike for ten times that period. "Those who are going on strike," he said, "are not paupers. They have savings, and are ready to use them for the cause. Also, our friends across the frontier are helping us in other ways besides sending donations of money. For example, they are arranging to take our children and keep them as their guests during the strike." Every one knew that much of this was true, and the inquietude of the people increased.

The Socialists boasted they had 125,000 men enrolled as members of their Trades Unions pledged to strike, and three times as many more prepared to strike with their comrades. They forgot two things in their eagerness: the moderation of the average Belgian, and his dislike to losing good money when he could gain it, or to part with it when he had earned it. They forgot also that, if they were well organized, the Catholics were equally well organized, and had many Trades Unions with large memberships. The Liberals, still allied to them, in fact and because of their timidity, forgot that a strong man, Baron de Broqueville, Prime Minister and Minister for War, directed the councils of the nation.

Education reform having proved a failure as a party cry, the Socialists cried only for Universal

Suffrage. The Liberals, while secretly detesting, and openly deprecating the strike, cried with the Socialists, though weakly, for Universal Suffrage. The cry might have been a good one, if either party was sincere in raising it; but neither desired what has now come to be known as Universal Suffrage. The Socialists wanted manhood suffrage, but would have nothing to do with votes for women; the Liberals went so far as to cry for suffrage for all citizens aged twenty-five, but they would go no farther, and, like the Socialists, they would hear nothing of woman suffrage.

As the day appointed for the strike approached, it was strange to note the unanimity with which Socialist and Liberal newspapers cried out for the intervention of the Crown, or hinted that it was to be counted on. King Albert was known to have ardent desires for the people's welfare. These desires, it was presumed, would lead him to counsel peace at any price. He was known to have little fear of the Socialist parliamentarians, and to be without objection to the Liberals. It was more than hinted that the King would cause the Cabinet to be reorganized so that its direction would be in the hands of its more Radical members, and, perhaps, so as to admit into it leaders of the Liberal party, who could well act as intermediaries between the Socialists and the Catholic chiefs. It soon became apparent that none of the measures predicted by the leaders of the Opposition would be taken. Instead of summoning Parliament to meet to cope with a critical situation, the Government allowed the recess to continue undisturbed, and, instead

of calling Deputies to Brussels, sent troops into districts where would-be strikers were to be found, to keep the peace.

On the fateful 14th of April the great strike commenced, and the aspect of crowded places changed. The week, or weeks, of gloomy Sundays commenced. Men with their wives and children, all in holiday attire, none with holiday aspects, wandered aimlessly about, whilst others worked on merrily at their habitual tasks, undisturbed.

The number of strikers was considerable. It has been variously estimated at from two to five hundred thousand; but whatever figure is set down as being that of the strikers can only be conjectural, and, even if the police census of men not working on the days during which the strike lasted was accepted, it cannot be taken as an accurate estimate of the men really on strike, for in many trades in Belgium, as in France, men do not work on Mondays, and in the mining districts of Belgium, where the strikers were most numerous, the moment chosen for the strike coincided with the period in spring when great numbers of miners knock off work to rest above ground, and refresh themselves in the fresh air and sunshine.

The strike was nowhere a general one. Its failure was evident before the day it commenced was half through. The Socialist leaders, both those who had combated its adoption and those who had forced it on, sought, somewhat wildly, to end what was obvious to all as a sham, with as little loss of money to their followers, and of prestige to themselves, as possible. In their need,

the Liberals came to their help. First M. Hymans, in the Chamber, as soon as that body met, proposed the reference of Reform to a Parliamentary Commission. When the Government refused to accept this measure, the Liberal Bourgmestres of the large towns came forward; they conferred at the Brussels Hôtel de Ville with the Socialist leaders, and presented themselves to Baron de Broqueville with suggestions of a compromise. The Prime Minister assured the Bourgmestres that the Government of which he was the chief was ready to consider any feasible proposal, and the Socialist leaders, being informed of what had passed, hastened to the strike leaders, assembled at the Maison du Peuple, informed them that victory was gained, that the Catholics had surrendered, and that the strike might honourably be ended. Thereupon it was proclaimed ended; but at the next sitting of the Chamber Baron de Broqueville declared he was misreported, and, despite the pleadings of Emile Vandervelde, and those who saw with him that the strike could never exist as a reality, the strike organizers met again, and again decreed that the general strike should take place, and be continued until the demands of the Socialist party were agreed to.

At this juncture the Bourgmestres again came to the Socialists' rescue. They explained to the Prime Minister that he did not understand the very moderate request of the Socialists, and to the Socialists that they had mistaken the most conciliatory attitude of the Premier. To end the farce the Prime Minister consented to appoint a

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BARON DE BROQUEVILLE, PRIME MINISTER

commission to inquire into and report on the question of the Reform of the system of voting for Provincial and City and County Council elections, and added that if the commission found any formula worth considering for the reform of the electorate of the Chamber, the Government would consent to its being discussed. The Socialists declared themselves satisfied with this, and those of them who were still out went back to work. The strikers had lost much money for the country and themselves, and gained absolutely nothing.

The strike had been a peaceful one from first to last. Something of this fact was due to the organization and the continual appeals for peace made by Emile Vandervelde and those who acted with him; but a very great part of it was also due to the determined attitude of the Prime Minister, and the able manner in which he caused dangerous localities to be policed and patrolled by gendarmes and soldiers.

The Government, and most of all its chief, came out of the contest with increased strength and public esteem. Baron de Broqueville having, by his firm attitude, crushed a dangerous combination of his party's foes in the spring of 1913, gained great victories for his country as well as for his party in the Parliamentary session of the same period. He carried an Army Bill, which, calling all young Belgians who fittingly could serve to the colours, will double the nominal strength of the army, and make it real, bringing up its effective to 300,000 men; and he has introduced, and as these lines are

being written, his colleague, M. Prosper Poullet, Minister of Science and Arts, is successfully carrying through the Chamber, a measure of Compulsory Education, which will provide adequate instruction for all the youth of Belgium, while constraining the consciences of none.

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PROSPER POULLET, MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND ART

APPENDIX

EDUCATION (see p. 312)

UNDER the law of the 20th of September, 1884, modified on certain points by the law of the 15th of September, 1895, there must be in each commune at least one communal school in a suitable building. The commune may adopt one or more private schools. If it does so, the King, on the advice of the Permanent Deputation, that is of the Provincial Council, may dispense the commune from the obligation of maintaining the communal school; but such dispensation cannot be accorded if twenty families having children of the age to attend school demand the creation and the maintenance of a communal school, and if the Permanent Deputation supports their demand. Primary communal schools are managed by the Communal Councils, which determine, according to the needs of the locality, the number of schools and that of the teachers. Primary instruction includes the teaching of religion and morality, reading, writing, arithmetic, French, Flemish or German, according as one or other is the language spoken in the district; geography, Belgian history, the elements of drawing, notions of hygiene, singing and gymnastics. The girls are also taught needlework, and the boys, in agricultural districts, agriculture. The Communal Councils are authorized to extend the

programme of instruction in any useful degree. Ministers of all religions are invited to give religious and moral instruction in the schools, the first and last half-hours of class, morning and evening, being set aside for such instruction. The number of primary schools which receive subsidies from the State and are examined by Government Inspectors are 7,525; 935,000 students attend them. Adding to this figure the number of pupils in Kindergartens, and schools for adults, the total number of pupils in schools examined by Government Inspectors is 1,437,597. In 1908, the latest year in which such a calculation was made, out of 1,160,582 children in the country aged between fourteen and sixteen years, there were only 46,381 (abnormals not included), or 3·13 per cent., who did not attend school. Belgians were illiterate, but they were never, since civilization dawned, uneducated. What schoolmasters did not teach them great artists and great patriots did. To-day the charge of illiteracy against the Belgians is false. M. Errera, Rector of the Liberal University of Brussels, has explained how education has spread over the land while no law made it compulsory. "The emulation between the free schools and the Government schools," he wrote, "carried far in every grade, passionately in primary education, evidently produces the habitual results of competition: instruction is offered for next to nothing, or nothing, and it is incessantly ameliorated. There are grounds for affirming that the number of illiterates is decreasing, and the schools are progressing." [1]

[1] Errera, *Traité de droit public belge*, p. 95.

The Education Law of 1895, framed in a spirit of compromise, though producing apparently good results, satisfies no one in Belgium. The great question of religion separates the inhabitants of the country. The Freethinkers are indignant because the law maintains religious instruction, and only permits them to have such instruction withheld from their children by their signifying to the schoolmasters, in writing, their desire to have it withheld. The Christians, on the other hand, are indignant because if in any school there is a child whose parent has demanded that religious instruction shall not be given to him, all the children attending that school are deprived of instruction in Christian morals, for the law requires the instruction to be "neutral" in schools where the children of Freethinkers and Christians are together, except during the two half-hours set apart for religious instruction.

The Christians hold that what is called neutral instruction is impossible. They contend that his beliefs must tinge all a master teaches. They declare it is impossible for children sitting on the same benches to be educated, some of them as believers in revealed religion, others as mockers at religion.

In the country parts, where all are Christians, the demands for exemption from religious instruction are few. In 1906 out of a total of 11,002 communal primary schools, with a roll of 505,314 pupils, 6,357 schools were of religious colour. The greater part of these were situated in villages or small towns. In the cities the situation was, and remains, different. There the instruction is neutral,

and neutral instruction means that nothing in the way of Christian morality may be taught.

It is, as has been said, sufficient for one man to declare he required no religious instruction to be given to his son to cause a whole school to be neutralized. In the province of Antwerp, such demands made for 161 children were sufficient to cause classes followed by 2,096 to be made neutral. In Luxembourg 139 demands neutralized classes followed by 2,043 children. In Limbourg three demands neutralized classes frequented by 119 children. In all Belgium the parents of 22,329 children who desired to have their children reared without religion succeeded in having instruction in Christian morality withheld from 111,565 children, and ill will towards religion of communal authorities withheld instruction in religion and in Christian morality from 59,276 additional children placed in schools where religious instruction might legally be given, but where, in fact, it was prevented from being given.[1]

Appalling as those figures are to those who consider religious instruction the prime necessity, the fact is still more appalling. In many cases it happens that ministers of religion find it impossible to attend at the schools at the morning and evening

[1] M. Verhaegen believes that in the majority of schools in which religious instruction is not given, the children's parents are in reality desirous of having their children instructed in religion, and actually have such instruction given to them outside the schools. He cites the example of Brussels, where religious instruction is hardly given in any communal school, but where, nevertheless, ninety-five per cent. of the children make their first communions.—Pierre Verhaegen, *Nos Griefs scolaire*, p. 29, note.

hours when instruction in religion may be given. They have, then, no other resource than to nominate delegates to give religious instruction, and it too often occurs that no fitting instructor is to be found. Sometimes, as at Brussels and Antwerp, the anti-religious communal authorities find means of so interpreting the law as to perpetually adjourn the consent that the nominees of the clergy may give religious instruction. More often the schoolmasters who are anti-religious consent to teach the catechism. "It is preferable," wrote an anti-clerical alderman, "that religious instruction should be ill given by an emancipated teacher than by the idiots designated by the clergy." [1]

The annual cost of the schools subject to State inspection, and maintained by grants from the State and the communes, is £2,172,500; that of the Catholic schools which, because of the desire of their managers to be free to teach religion as they wish, receive no grants from State or commune is £1,000,000.[2] The Bill which M. Schollaert introduced in 1912 would have put an end, it was hoped, to the disastrous warfare of parties on the Education question. That Bill being withdrawn, the Cabinet of Baron de Broqueville, who succeeded M. Schollaert in the Premiership, introduced another, which may settle the most vexed and most important question in Belgium. This Bill, now passed, makes instruction obligatory and imposes fines on parents who persist in disregarding its provisions. It permits parents to send their children to whatever

[1] *Journal de Charleroi*, 13th of November, 1908.
[2] Verhaegen, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

schools they choose, and the teachers in these schools, being subject to examination by the Government, will be paid sufficient salaries by the State. The attempt to make schools during different hours religious and non-religious will be abandoned, and a sane code enforced. Teachers are no longer forbidden to instruct children in Christian morality, but they are required to abstain, in their teaching, from attacks against the personalities or the religious convictions of families whose children are confided to their care.

The provinces and communes may establish normal schools. For secondary education grants are made by the Government, the provinces, and the communes; these grants amount to £269,000.

The country has also State schools of agriculture, horticulture, arboriculture, technical education, domestic economy, and cooking. It maintains fifty-four dairy schools for men in which capable managers of co-operative creameries are formed.

There are four universities in Belgium : the State Universities of Ghent and Liége, where instruction is given under the direction of, and at the expense of the State; the Catholic University of Louvain, and the Liberal University of Brussels. The student population of these universities was, in 1913, at Ghent, 1,252; Liége, 2,793; Brussels, 1,384; Louvain, 2,870.

The teachers in the subsidized schools must be Belgian subjects; they must hold diplomas issued to successful students of the teachers' training college, or certificates that they have passed the government examination for teachers. The minimum salaries of male teachers is fixed at 1,200

francs (£48), and that of female teachers at 1,100 francs (£44), with allowance for residences, and increases for length of service in every case.

The subsidized primary schools are of three classes: communal schools, built and managed under State supervision by the communes; adopted schools, built by private persons, but adopted by the communes, and managed in like manner to the communal schools; and adoptable schools, which, though not adopted by the communes, are accepted by the State as possessing the necessary qualifications, and managed under State supervision.

Primary instruction in the schools of each class, communal, adopted, and adoptable, must be gratuitous, and children of poor parents must be supplied with school books and other requisites free of cost.

To the instruction hitherto given in the primary schools there is added that of a Fourth Degree, intended as a preparation for technical instruction, girls being taught the rudiments of agriculture and horticulture in rural communes, as well as needlework, domestic economy, and household management; and boys, the rudiments of agriculture and horticulture in rural districts, and those of natural science in other districts.

Children are to be taught in their mother tongue, what is their mother, or usual tongue, being determined by the declarations of their fathers, or the heads of their families, modifications of this rule being permitted in the Brussels district and on the linguistic frontier, but such modifications must not be made to the detriment of the full study of the mother tongue.

All subsidized schools are to be subject to free medical supervision.

Provincial and Communal Councils may establish school refectories, and school colonies, or vacation homes, and distribute clothes and food free to school-children, or grant subsidies for their free distribution, subject to the royal approbation, and provided that the children attending the schools of each category benefit equally by the grants made for these purposes.

The Education Bill was introduced into the Chamber on the 14th of October, 1913, by M. Prosper Poullet, Minister of Science and Art; it passed its second reading in the Chamber, and was carried to the Senate on the 18th of February, 1914.

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